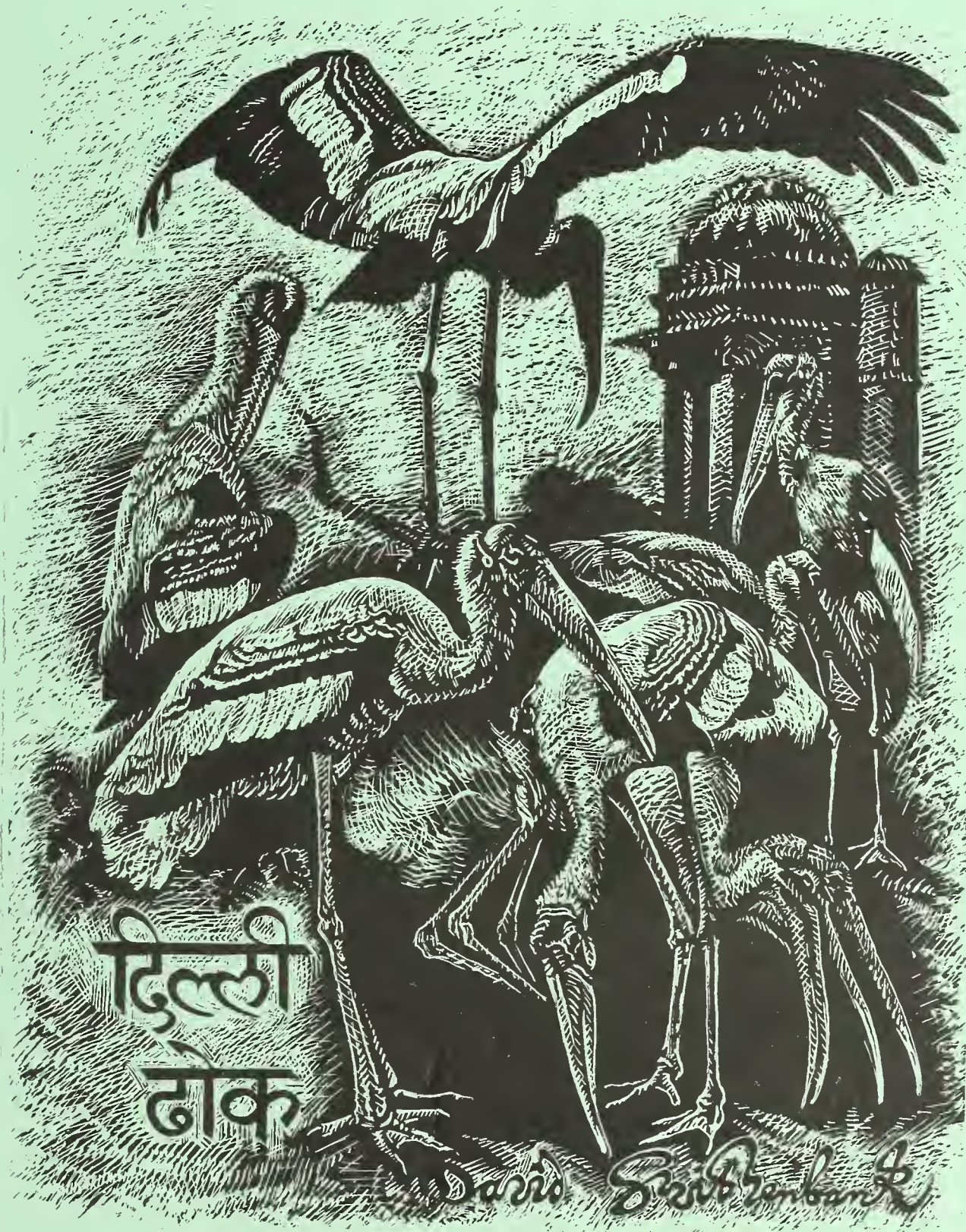


ORIENTAL BIRD CLUB



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THE ORIENTAL BIRD CLUB aims to:

- * encourage an interest in the birds of the Oriental region and their conservation.
- * liaise with and promote the work of existing regional societies.
- * collate and publish material on Oriental birds.

Two bulletins and a journal, *Forktail*, are published annually.

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Membership of the Club is open to all and costs £9 per annum (£6 reduced rate for nationals living in Oriental countries), and £15 for corporate members (organisations, libraries and universities). Please send your name address and payment to the Membership Secretary, OBC, c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire, SG19 2LD, U.K. Please write in for details of payment into our U.S. or Indian bank accounts, or payment by direct debit or Giro.

Cover illustration: Painted Storks *Mycteria leucocephala* by David Swithenbank.



Club News

1990 AGM in London

The sixth Annual General Meeting of the Oriental Bird Club will be held at the Zoological Society meeting rooms at Regent's Park in London on Saturday 1 December from 12.30hrs - 17.00hrs. Full details are enclosed with this Bulletin. As usual everyone is welcome and there will be plenty of time to meet other members, as well as listen to the programme of talks.

OBC Meetings in 1991

The full programme of meetings for next year is not yet finalised but the following dates are confirmed.

UK: Blakeney Village Hall, Norfolk on Bank Holiday Sunday 25 August 1991.

UK: Scilly Isles on Thursday 17 October 1991

UK: AGM, Zoological Society meeting rooms, Regent's Park, London on Saturday 14 December 1991.

Full details of these will be published in the Bulletin next year. Other meetings may be arranged. If you are keen to have a meeting in your country and could assist in its organisation, please contact the meetings officer at the Club's address.

Not to Late to Join OBC Bhutan Tour

It is still possible to book a place on the OBC tour to Bhutan which will be led by Tim Inskipp - an acknowledged expert on Himalayan birds. The tour dates are 3 March 1991 to 21 March 1991 and the cost is £2600 (London to London).

Starting in London the tour group will fly to New Delhi, on to Bagdogora in north east India and then drive into Bhutan. Over the next five days the tour will move eastwards staying at Paro, Wangdiphodrang and Tongsa and exploring the rich forests of the Dochu La and Pele La. After a night in the Bumthang Valley, we will drive to Shemgang looking for Rufous-necked Hornbill. From here we will drive back to the Pele La, and the beautiful Popshika Valley, home to a sizeable wintering population of Black-necked Cranes *Grus nigricollis*. We will then embark on a four-day trek through the remote Black Mountains, which to our knowledge have not been explored previously by ornithologists. The trek will bring us back to Wangdi, from where we will drive to the old capital of Bunaka for a night, before leaving on the following morning for Phuntsholing and the Indian border.

Bookings for the tour can be accepted up until mid December 1990. Please contact Paul Jepson, OBC Bhutan Tour, at the Club's address to reserve your place or for more details.

Support the Club's Honorary Membership Scheme

Many nationals of countries within the Oriental region would very much like to become members of the Club but are unable to join because of problems such as foreign exchange restrictions. To help them the Club has set up an honorary membership scheme. This has already received some funding from the Loke Wan Tho Memorial Foundation and the World Wildlife Fund - Hong Kong and is currently supporting 79 individuals or organisations in their membership of the OBC. However some individual Club members have expressed a wish to contribute to the honorary membership scheme and to allow them to do so, the Club is now offering a new category of membership - 'supporting membership'. This will cost £15 being the combined cost of one ordinary membership plus one membership for a national living in the Orient. Through this scheme we hope to enable more people who are currently unable to do so, to benefit from membership of the Club. If you wish to become a supporting member, please contact the membership secretary.

Report on the Manchester Meeting on Indonesia

The vast archipelago of Indonesia, which contains 17% of the world's birds, was the subject of the Club's Manchester meeting in July this year. Richard Grimmett opened the meeting, describing the problems which face conservationists in these islands. They have the second largest expanse of forest remaining in the world containing many endemic bird species, some of which are threatened by habitat loss, hunting and trade.

Martin Jones gave an overview of the Manchester University expedition to Sumba and Buru. They found only small areas of forest left on Sumba, but saw all the island's endemic birds including the little known Sumba Buttonquail *Turnix everetti*. This was in contrast to Buru where there is extensive forest remaining. Here some of the endemics were not seen but a number of them, such as Buru Racket-tailed Parrot *Prioniturus flavicans*, were very common.

Members were then treated to a short slide show of paintings by Kamol Komolphalin who spoke about his work. Kamol, President of the Bangkok Bird Club, is an internationally renowned wildlife artist and one of the illustrators of the new edition of the *Birds of Thailand*, which is to be published soon.

Stu Marsden described his work, funded by an OBC survey grant, on the parrot trade in Indonesia. He suggested that although some species were exceptionally common, the effect of trade upon their populations is largely unknown. Finally, Jon Hornbuckle talked on his birdwatching trip to Java and Sulawesi and tempted members with talk and pictures of Salvadori's Nightjar *Caprimulgus pulchellus*, Knobbed Hornbill *Rhyticeros cassidix*, Purple-winged Roller *Coracias temminckii*, and Sulawesi Kingfisher *Ceyx fallax*.

Report on the Blakeney Meeting

The Club's annual summer meeting was again held in the north Norfolk village of Blakeney and featured a series of talks on the Indian subcontinent. It started

with Seb Buckton who showed an excellent series of slides taken on a birdwatching trip to north India and the western Himalaya which included birds such as Great Indian Bustard *Ardeotis nigriceps*, Stoliczka's Bushchat *Saxicola macrorhyncha*, Black-throated Accentor *Prunella atrogularis*, White throated Woodpecker *Picoides leucopterus*, and Siberian White Crane *Grus leucogeranus*.

After the break Pete Morris spoke about a visit to Nepal which included Kathmandu, the Jomson trail and eastern Nepal. He illustrated the route with shots of Spiny Babbler *Turdoides nipalensis*, Cheer Pheasant *Catreus wallichii*, Little Forktail *Enicurus scouleri*, Greater Adjutant *Leptoptilos dubius*, Hodgson's Stonechat *Saxicola insignis*, and both Wood and Solitary Snipe *Gallinago nemoricola* and *solitaria*.

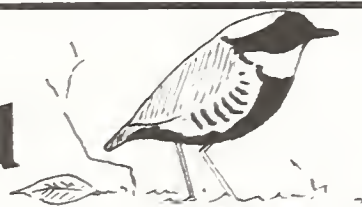
This was followed by Andy Clements' description of Bhutan, a country with vast areas of untouched forest which he has been lucky enough to have visited twice. This provided an excellent conclusion to a meeting that provided a glimpse of the excitement of birdwatching in the subcontinent.

(Meeting reports contributed by Nigel Lindsay)

Thanks to ICBP

Once again the Club would like to thank ICBP for the use of their facilities in the production of this Bulletin.

Conservation Fund



Survey Grants - Applications Welcomed

The OBC is able to make available survey grants of up to £300 for suitable projects. Applications are welcomed at any time of year. A leaflet describing what sort of work will qualify and the conditions attached is enclosed with this Bulletin. To apply or to discuss the work you plan to do please contact OBC's Conservation Officer, Carol Inskipp at the Club's address.

Survey Grant News

A preliminary report has been received from Simplicia Alonzo Pasicolan who earlier this year received an OBC grant to carry out a survey of birds caught by

trappers at Dalton Pass in the Philippines. She found that 97 different species are regularly caught and also carried out some investigations into the trade in these for export.

Rex De Silva has been awarded a grant of £300 to survey the wintering waders, gulls and terns at Negombo Lagoon in Sri Lanka this year. The lagoon has only recently been recognised as an important site for wintering birds, but faces threats from siltation, pollution, population pressure and tourism.

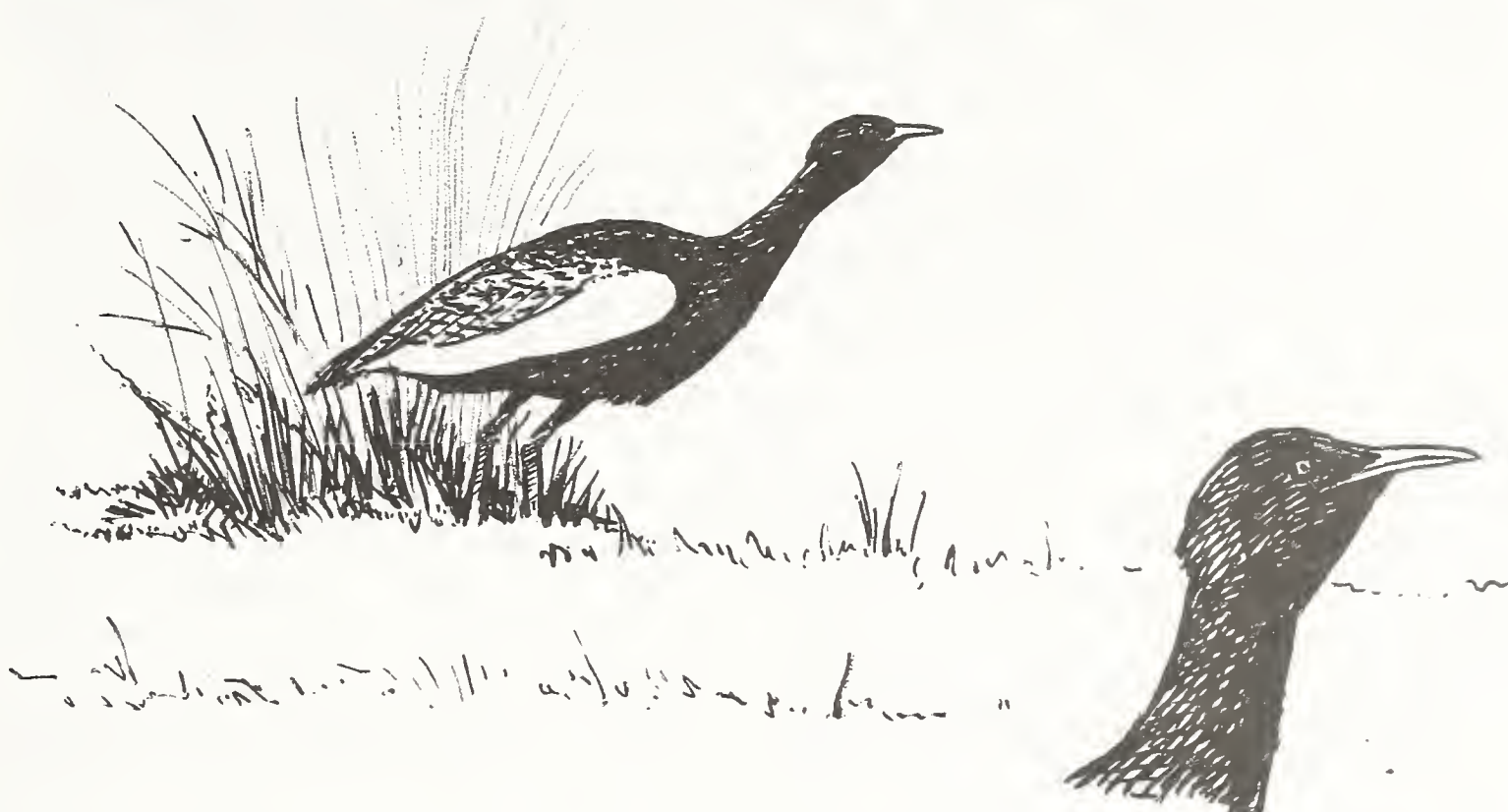
- CONSERVATION FUND IN ACTION - CONSERVATION FUND IN ACTION -

Survey of Sukla Phanta for Bengal Floricans

While Nepal's dwindling forests have justly deserved most attention in recent years, there has also been considerable loss and degradation of grasslands in the country's terai region and in the neighbouring states of northern India. In the Gangetic Plain as a whole, few large, undisturbed tracts of grassland now exist outside protected reserves, and many of these are subject to intense pressure. Among a number of species to have declined as a result is the Bengal Florican *Houbaropsis bengalensis*. This attractive bustard, once widespread throughout the region, is now seriously endangered with a known population of less than 300-400 remaining in the subcontinent.

In 1982, a nation-wide survey of floricans found the main stronghold in Nepal to be the Royal Sukla Phanta Wildlife Reserve in the little-known far-western terai. In view of lack of recent information, and further declines at other, more familiar sites (mentioned later), I undertook a short visit in late March this year to rediscover its fortunes.

Sukla Phanta, due to its remoteness, has received little attention from birdwatchers and naturalists. Although a new east-west highway is under construction, the main access is still a seasonal track which fords the numerous rivers along the way. As access to the reserve is generally restricted, few facilities exist for visitors. The area, however, has long been known for its abundant wildlife. Many large mammals are present including one of the few remaining wild populations of Asian Elephant *Elephas maximus* in Nepal. Over 270 species of birds have been recorded, including 22 vulnerable breeding species. Formerly a hunting area, Sukla Phanta was established as a reserve in 1976, covering some 155 sq km of flat or gently undulating flood-plain, fed by the Mahakali River and its tributaries. Descending from the Churia and Mahabharat Hills in the north, this river forms part of the border with India on the reserve's western flank. About two-thirds of the reserve is forested, mainly with Sal *Shorea robusta*, a remnant of a once continuous forest tract, which outside the reserve is now largely cleared for agriculture in this fertile region.



Bengal Floricans *Houbaropsis bengalensis* (by Richard Grimmett)

The grasslands (or phantas), the most extensive in the country, dominate the southern parts of the reserve. The largest of these, from which the reserve derives its name, comprises some 4 sq km of open plains flanked to the south and west by a savannah zone of scattered *Acacia* and *Bombax*. A large seasonal swamp lies to the east. Among the wide variety of grasses, some of which may reach 4 m in wetter areas, is the common and widespread species *Imperata cylindrica*. This is harvested annually by local villagers for thatch, a practice which is now strictly controlled during a short period early in the dry season, after which remaining stands are extensively burnt to stimulate new growth. The aim is to provide grazing for the many herbivores, including a large population of Swamp Deer *Cervus duvauceli* for which the grassland is primarily managed.

Bengal Floricans are thought to be largely sedentary and start to breed on the phantas in the late dry season. They are extremely wary birds and easily disturbed. Females are highly secretive and seldom seen. Males, however, can be conspicuous during breeding activity when they may frequent short grass areas in the early morning and evening to display and feed. Favoured areas may attract small groups of rival birds. On territory, the spectacular 'bouncing' display leap may occasionally be seen, accompanied by loud wing-clapping. During the heat of the day the floricans retire into taller grass.

During a ten-day visit to Sukla Phanta, I attempted to survey most suitable grasslands for floricans each morning and evening from a base on the reserve. A well-maintained system of tracks enabled access by bicycle and occasionally vehicle, while a centrally situated hide (or machan) and scattered trees provided

good vantage points from which to scan the surroundings. All sightings were mapped and minimum counts were attempted by covering a full 'circuit'. Similarly, two smaller phantas at Bardia National Park were covered during a three-day visit.

In the light of changes elsewhere, it was encouraging to find that numbers were fairly consistent with the 1982 survey, both at Sukla Phanta where 17 (inc. three females) were found (15 in 1982), and at Bardia where six were seen (9-10 in 1982). At the other main site, Chitwan, the population has declined in recent years. This is thought to be linked to changes in grass species composition caused by repeated burning over a long time. The relatively short *Imperata* sward favoured by floricans has gradually been replaced by taller grasses. The site near Kosi Barrage is thought to have lost its small population due to changes in the course of the river there. Recent surveys in India have found most of the remaining strongholds to be the large reserves in Assam, the exception being Dudwa National Park, close to the sites in western Nepal. Here up to 40 have been found, and interchange seems likely with Sukla Phanta, just 60 km away.

The grasslands and wetlands of Sukla Phanta are important to a number of other scarce and declining species. Raptors are well represented on the reserve, with several eagles, vultures and four harrier species present, mainly as winter visitors. While White-eyed Buzzard *Butastur teesa* and Black-shouldered Kite *Elanus caeruleus* are fairly common residents, endangered species such as Grey-headed and Lesser Fishing Eagles *Ichthyophaga ichthyaetus* and *I. nana*, and Brown Fish Owl *Ketupa zeylonensis* also breed. The rare Grass Owl *Tyto capensis*, known also from Chitwan, may be resident at Sukla Phanta. The Sarus Crane *Grus antigone* occurs here as does the much more elusive, threatened Swamp Francolin *Francolinus gularis* which is found at few other places in Nepal outside the western terai. Sukla Phanta supports a variety of wetland species typical of the terai, and is in addition the only regular site for Black Bittern *Dupetor flavicollis* in the country. Among the passerines are several lowland grassland species such as Bright-capped Cisticola *Cisticola exilis*, White-tailed Stonechat *Saxicola leucura*, Large Grass Warbler *Graminicola bengalensis*, Striated Marsh Warbler *Megalurus palustris* and Red-capped Babbler *Timalia pileata*; all birds which have a rather fragmented distribution within their range.

Like similar reserves in the region, Sukla Phanta is not without threats. The immediate problems of poaching and illegal cattle-grazing are being tackled, but wider implications for the ecology of the monsoon grasslands arise from a major scheme currently underway to divert the waters of the Mahakali River for irrigation. The likely impact upon this region of a new road link with the rest of the country is as yet unknown. However, a large reserve extension is planned, including a substantial area of grassland, which with suitable management should further enhance its importance to birds like the Bengal Florican.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am greatly indebted to staff of the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation for their considerable interest, hospitality and help during this survey. Grateful thanks are due to Carol Inskipp for guidance and information prior to my visit.

David Weaver, 30 Strumpshaw Road, Brundall, Norwich, NR13 5PA, UK.

- CONSERVATION FUND IN ACTION - CONSERVATION FUND IN ACTION -

Surveying Nias and Simeulue Islands in Indonesia

Nias and Simeulue are two islands which lie next to each other, off the west coast of north Sumatra. I had wanted to spent several weeks carrying out some useful survey work in Indonesia and selected these two islands from a list of sites in Sumatra in need of surveying held by ICBP. The main purpose of my visit was to assess the extent of any remaining forest, to survey the birds in such areas and to investigate the extent to which forest birds have adapted to secondary habitats.

Both islands are accessible by plane from Medan, as well as by boat from ports on the west Sumatran coast. Nias (which is some 130 km from its south-east to north-west tips, and up to 45 km across) is much more heavily populated and more developed than the smaller Simeulue (100 km by 15-30 km across), and was known to be largely, if not completely, deforested.

I chose to visit Nias first, and soon discovered that none of my three maps was of much use. Village names were often different from the names in use and some villages were shown in completely the wrong place. Roads total a mere 230 km or so, about a quarter of what my maps indicated; some other tracks are negotiable by motorbike, but most are foot-paths only. However, I was able to travel quite widely around the island but failed to locate any significant primary forest. Conversation with locals tended to confirm that none remains intact.

There were a few tiny fragments of good forest, but only on steep, inaccessible crags and ridges, and certainly not large enough to support an undiminished community of forest birds.

Shifting, subsistence-based agriculture has left many hills and valleys completely denuded of trees. Those that are not are a mosaic of secondary woodland and scrub dominated by rubber, cloves, bananas and, mainly in coastal regions, coconut-palms. Interspersed are more open areas where crops such as cassava, sweet potato and rice are grown. There is some peat-swamp forest in the northern coastal plain but timber had been extracted from the area that I reached and the adjacent land had been cleared and drained.

After two weeks on the island I arrived at a remote coastal village adjacent to a mangrove swamp and what looked like an area of good peat-swamp forest. On a short walk on a small area of intertidal mudflat (the only such habitat that I found in Nias) I saw a variety of waders, but in the process managed to slice open the underside of my foot. Unfortunately this injury forced me to abandon exploration of the area and to return to Gunungsitoli, the main town, as soon as possible, and it forced me to greatly curtail and then, reluctantly, abandon my subsequent visit to Simeulue.

Prior to my visit the only ornithological data from Nias were the results of seven collecting visits made between 1854 and 1903 and a 12-day collecting visit in June 1939. On these, a total of 147 species, with one further 'query' were recorded. Thirty six of these were migrants and so, not surprisingly, in May I recorded just five of them, though I also saw seven new species of migrants. These were Great Egret *Egretta alba*, Lesser Sand Plover *Charadrius mongolus*, Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus*, Little Tern *Sterna albifrons*, Stonechat *Saxicola torquata* (according to Van Marle & Voous there is only one previous record for Sumatra), Oriental Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus (arundinaceus) orientalis* and Brown Shrike *Lanius cristatus*.

The one 'query' species was Pied Imperial Pigeon *Ducula bicolor* which I found to be widespread and clearly resident. I recorded 71 of the other 111 species whose status is listed as resident or indeterminate (probably resident but no proven breeding record). In addition, I found Large Green Pigeon *Treron capellei* at two well separated sites on the eastern end of the island, Olive-backed Sunbird *Nectarinia jugularis* in Gunungsitoli and at Lahewa in the northwest of the island, and Eurasian Tree-Sparrow *Passer montanus*, also at Lahewa. Presumably the sunbird had been overlooked in the past, while the sparrow is probably a recent coloniser, although no previous ornithological visits have been to the northwest of the island. The records of Large Green Pigeon are perhaps more puzzling; could a remnant population have hung on since deforestation, or has colonisation taken place? Van Marle & Voous list a 'possible' sight record in 1985 from Siberut, the next large island to the south-east of Nias.

Of the 40 species that I did not record, perhaps the ones most dependent on primary forest are Black Eagle *Ictinaetus malayensis*, Blyth's Hawk-Eagle *Spizaetus alboniger*, Wallace's Hawk-Eagle *S. nanus* (endemic subspecies), Jambu Fruit Dove *Ptilinopus jambu*, Brown Wood Owl *Strix leptogrammica* (end. subsp.),

Green Broadbill *Calyptomena viridis*, Greater Green Leafbird *Chloropsis sonnerati* and Scaly-crowned Babbler *Malacopteron cinereum* (end. subsp.). The continued survival on Nias of these eight species, most particularly the three eagles, must be seriously in doubt.

Unlike Nias, Simeulue receives no tourists at all. The one road is perhaps 60 km long, straddling the more populated, narrow eastern end of the island and extending west along both north and south coasts. However the buses only ply over a 30 km stretch. Cloves and coconut-oil are the main cash-crops but are largely restricted to the eastern end of the island and the coastal areas elsewhere.

Much of the hinterland, particularly the western part, is probably still cloaked in dense forest. Even on Gunung Sibau (at 576 m the highest hill), which is less than 15 km from the main town Sinabang, the forest still looks intact, apart from around the base.

The island has a list of 99 recorded species including the endemic Simeulue Scops Owl *Otus umbra* and about twenty endemic subspecies, plus three new species that I found in my brief stay. They were White-browed Crake *Porzana cinerea*, Blue-crowned Hanging Parrot *Loriculus galgulus* and Richard's Pipit *Anthus novaeseelandiae*. Previous studies have been few and brief and many parts of the island have not been visited by any ornithologists, including all three fresh-water lakes, the extensive mangroves on the north coast and, of course, most of the forest.

Nick Dymond, Burgadies, South Punds, Levenwick, Shetland, UK.



News and Views

New Wintering Area for Black-necked Cranes Found

A large wintering population of Black-necked Cranes *Grus nigricollis* has been discovered in Yunnan province in south-west China, apparently the biggest single concentration in the country, the Chinese magazine *Nature* reports. Huang Guozhu, a researcher with the Yunnan Environmental Protection Commission, puts the size of the newly discovered flock at about 400, in addition to previously known populations totalling 500 to 700 in Yunnan, which together with neighbouring Guizhou are the main wintering areas in China for this species.

The new flock was discovered in December 1988 at Dashanbao, 80 km west

of Zhaotong city in north-eastern Yunnan, which is around 150 km north-west of Cao Hai (Grass Sea) lake in Guizhou province, another important wintering site for the species. Huang conducted most of his fieldwork between October 1989 and February 1990, and has been remarkably fast in getting his research into print. He says the Dashanbao cranes were found at elevations of between 2,800 and 3,100 metres and gather in greatest numbers around Tiaodun River Reservoir, where they roost and are seen flocking over an area of marshland and bare mountainsides covering around 2,000 hectares. The birds are not currently under direct threat, but there is concern about the human pressure on the marshland where vegetation is taken for firewood and water levels are falling.

Two hundred cranes were gathered around Tiaodun River Reservoir, and in particular on seven inlets where vegetation is plentiful and where pigs and goats also graze. Between 70 and 100 more were seen at Dahaizi, 13 km away and at Zhuanshanbao, an area that is particularly little disturbed by humans, 22 km from the town of Dashanbao, there were between 55 and 90 cranes.

The birds were seen feeding mainly on roots and tubers, oats, buckwheat and turnip seeds, but sometimes landed near pigs, cows and horses and would peck at their dung and at insects disturbed by the livestock.

Huang notes that Dashanbao, together with Huize, about 200 km to the south, and Cao Hai are the main three wintering grounds of the Black-necked Crane discovered in China so far, and that Dashanbao has the largest number.

(Contributed by Michael Rank. Source: Huang Guozhu (1990) A newly discovered wintering area of Black-necked Cranes. *Da Ziran* [Nature] 1990. 2 (40):11 [in Chinese].)

Good News About Bengal Floricans

Recent observations of the Bengal Florican *Houbaropsis bengalensis* have given hope for the species in Indochina. At least four birds were seen in Tam Nong District of Dong Thap Province, Viet Nam in March 1990, by researchers from the University of Ha Noi and the International Crane Foundation.

Further good news has been received from Arunachal Pradesh, north-east India where 12 floricans (11 males and one female) were observed this April in the grasslands of the D'Ering Memorial Wildlife Sanctuary. There have been no recent records from this hill state which has in general been closed to visitors. (Source: data provided by Paul Goriup and Taej Mundkur)

Threat to Pa Phru Non-Hunting Area

There is considerable concern in Thailand that the Pa Phru Non-Hunting Area could be severely damaged by a project on the Bang Nara River. It is feared that the project, which involves the building of barrages on the river, will raise the water table and adversely affect this important bird area.

Pa Phru is a large depression with extensive lowland forest in Narathiwat Province, southern Thailand. Primary peat swamp forest and *Melaleuca* woodland

and scrub cover nearly 250 sq km. As well as being one of the last expanses of lowland forest in Thailand, and supporting a population of the globally threatened Large Green Pigeon *Treron capellei*, the area is of considerable value to the local people who harvest forest fruits, rattans, fish and frogs from the area. (Source: *Bangkok Post* 10.5.90; *A Directory of Asian Wetlands*, IUCN 1989).

Brown Eared-pheasant found in suburbs of western Beijing

A population of Brown Eared-pheasant *Crossoptilon mantchuricum*, endemic to northern China, has been discovered in the western suburbs of Beijing, a Chinese natural history magazine reports. An article in *Da Ziran* [Nature] (1990:3) says the birds were found last winter and spring at Qijiazhuang near the town of Mentougou, and that one specimen was taken. It gives no further details. The area is about 40 km from the city area and is not normally open to foreigners. The Brown Eared-pheasant has suffered badly from mountain deforestation, and was hitherto known only from three reserves, including Pangquangou in Shanxi province where it is apparently fairly common. (Contributed by Michael Rank).



Brown Eared-pheasant *Crossoptilon mantchuricum* (by Richard Grimmett)

Shi-jui Lake: a Winter Refuge for Wildlife

For more than a decade the authors have been recording birds at Shi-jui Lake and believe that its importance, especially for wintering birds, justifies some form of protection to prevent the area being gradually degraded by drainage, reclamation and other activities.

Shi-jui Lake (latitude 31° 22' - 35' N, longitude 118° 46' - 59' E) lies in the lower reaches of the Changjiang (Yangtse) River, straddling the borders of Anhui and Jiangsu provinces. The area of the lake fluctuates in accordance with seasonal changes, but is typically between 214 sq km and 340 sq km. The water level varies between 6m and 8m, rising from April to a peak in July, thereafter falling to its lowest level which it reaches in November.

In total, 91 species of non-passerine birds have been recorded by the authors, the majority of them being birds wintering on and around the lake. Birds start arriving in August, when the water level begins to fall.

Ducks, the most numerous birds wintering on the lake, arrive between September and November staying until late March. Initially the birds feed on the newly harvested rice paddies, but later move on to the lake. Early arrivals are Garganey *Anas querquedula* and Common Teal *A. crecca*. Mallard *A. platyrhynchos*, Spot-billed Duck *A. poecilorhyncha* and Northern Pintail *A. acuta* arrive later. Northern Pintail, Spot-billed Duck and Common Teal are present in the largest numbers.

Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*, Spotted Redshank *Tringa erythropus*, Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*, Common Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus*, Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus* and Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola* are the most numerous bird species after the ducks.

Also present during the winter months since 1975 have been a group of between four and 12 Red-crowned Cranes *Grus japonensis*. They favour the Danyang commune area feeding on the lake margins by day and flying to an area of shallow water at dusk. Except for a few birds distributed in the areas of Shaobo Lake and Gaoyou Lake of northern Jiangsu province (32° 40' N, 119° 20' E), Shi-jui Lake is the only inland area of the lower reaches of the Changjiang River where wintering Red-crowned Cranes can be found.

Great Bustards *Otis tarda* spend the winter in the large areas of relatively undisturbed wheatfields near the lake. They have been seen in two flocks, one of about ten to 20 individuals, the other of 50 to 60 birds.

October sees the arrival of Oriental Storks *Ciconia boyciana*, which in the recent past gathered in flocks of between 20 and 60 birds and moved widely around the whole Shi-jui Lake area. However in the last three years numbers have plummeted; only three were found in January 1988, none in 1989, and four in 1990.

Northern Lapwing are distributed widely and found mostly on the drier and grassy beaches. Great Bitterns *Botaurus stellaris* favour ditches with patches of *Zizania caduciflora*.

Migration passage in spring (March to April) and autumn (September to October) brings new birds to the lake. Surveys have so far recorded 21 species including Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva*, Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*, Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*, Wood Sandpiper *T. glareola*, Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*, Pintail Snipe *Gallinago stenura*, Swinhoe's Snipe *G. megala* and Oriental Pratincole *Glareola maldivarum*. Less common but sometimes seen are Greater Sand-Plover *C. leschenaultii*, Little Curlew *Numenius minutus*, Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa* and Pied Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*. Little Terns *Sterna albifrons* are also recorded on passage and White-winged Terns *Chlidonias leucopterus* collect in large flocks of between 40 and 50 birds, wheeling round to pick up insects as they follow the farmers' ploughs.

Summer migrants are few, perhaps because of the lack of suitable breeding grounds near the lake. Only 21 species have been recorded, the most common being Yellow Bittern *Ixobrychus sinensis*, Schrenk's Bittern *I. eurhythmus*, Cinnamon Bittern *I. cinnamomeus*, White-breasted Waterhen *Amaurornis phoenicurus*, Watercock *Gallicrex cinerea*, and Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*. Cotton Pygmy Geese *Nettapus coromandelianus* can be found on lotus ponds; Spot-billed Ducks prefer reed beds.

Resident birds are even less numerous; only seven species being recorded by the authors. Some Little Grebes *Tachybaptus ruficollis* and Spot-billed Duck stay all year. Present but less common are Greater Paintedsnipe *Rostratula benghalensis* and White-throated Kingfisher *Halcyon smyrnensis*.

Of all the species found in the surveys, 68% are protected by the Chinese Government in some way. Red-crowned Crane, Common Crane *Grus grus*, Oriental Stork, Great Bustard and Mandarin Duck *Aix galericulata*, three species of Falconiformes and two species of Strigiformes are all nationally protected birds in China and 58 species are protected under the China-Japan Migratory Birds Agreement (1981).

Despite this, and because of a lack of conservation awareness and of scientific management of the area, destruction of the marshland environments of Shi-jui Lake continues. Water levels in most lakes have fallen in recent years because of land reclamation and drainage. With loss of habitat there has been a commensurate decline in the numbers of birds wintering in the area. Other human activities which endanger the future of Shi-jui's wildlife include hunting from boats, 'angling' for Common Moorhens using grasshoppers as bait, and widespread use of pesticides.

Table 1

List of non-passerine bird species recorded at Shi-jiu Lake

Species	English Name	Status
<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	Little Grebe	R
<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	Grey Heron	W
<i>Ardea purpurea</i>	Purple Heron	P
<i>Butorides striatus</i>	Little Green Heron	S
<i>Ardeola bacchus</i>	Chinese Pond Heron	S
<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	Cattle Egret	W* S
<i>Egretta alba</i>	Great Egret	W
<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	Little Egret	S
<i>Egretta intermedia</i>	Intermediate Egret	W*
<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>	Black-crowned Night Heron	P
<i>Ixobrychus sinensis</i>	Yellow Bittern	S
<i>Ixobrychus eurhythmus</i>	Schrenck's Bittern	S
<i>Ixobrychus cinnamomeus</i>	Cinnamon Bittern	S
<i>Dupetor flavicollis</i>	Black Bittern	S
<i>Botaurus stellaris</i>	Great Bittern	W
<i>Ciconia boyciana</i>	Oriental Stork	W
<i>Anser cygnoides</i>	Swan Goose	W
<i>Anser fabalis</i>	Bean Goose	P
<i>Anser erythropus</i>	Lesser White-fronted Goose	W
<i>Tadorna ferruginea</i>	Ruddy Shelduck	W
<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>	Common Shelduck	W
<i>Anas acuta</i>	Northern Pintail	W
<i>Anas crecca</i>	Common Teal	W
<i>Anas formosa</i>	Baikal Teal	W
<i>Anas falcata</i>	Falcated Duck	W
<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	Mallard	W
<i>Anas poecilorhyncha</i>	Spot-billed Duck	W
<i>Anas penelope</i>	Eurasian Wigeon	W
<i>Anas querquedula</i>	Garganey	P
<i>Anas clypeata</i>	Northern Shoveler	W
<i>Aythya fuligula</i>	Tufted Duck	W
<i>Aix galericulata</i>	Mandarin Duck	W
<i>Nettapus coromandelianus</i>	Cotton Pygmy Goose	S
<i>Mergus merganser</i>	Common Merganser	W
<i>Accipiter nisus</i>	Eurasian Sparrowhawk	W
<i>Circus cyaneus</i>	Hen Harrier	W
<i>Circus melanoleucos</i>	Pied Harrier	W
<i>Turnix tanki</i>	Yellow-legged Buttonquail	W
<i>Grus grus</i>	Common Crane	W
<i>Grus japonensis</i>	Red-crowned Crane	W
<i>Rallus aquaticus</i>	Water Rail	W
<i>Porzana pusilla</i>	Baillon's Crake	W
<i>Porzana fusca</i>	Ruddy-breasted Crake	S
<i>Amaurornis phoenicurus</i>	White-breasted Waterhen	S

Key

W - winter migrant
P - passage migrant
R - resident

W* - occasional winter migrant
S - summer migrant
R* - occasional resident

Species	English Name	Status
<i>Gallicrex cinerea</i>	Watercock	S
<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	Common Moorhen	S
<i>Fulica atra</i>	Common Coot	W
<i>Otis tarda</i>	Great Bustard	W
<i>Hydrophasianus chirurgus</i>	Pheasant-tailed Jacana	S
<i>Rostratula benghalensis</i>	Greater Paintedsnipe	R
<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	Northern Lapwing	W
<i>Vanellus cinereus</i>	Grey-headed Lapwing	S
<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>	Grey Plover	W
<i>Pluvialis fulva</i>	Pacific Golden Plover	P
<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>	Common Ringed Plover	W
<i>Charadrius dubius</i>	Little Ringed Plover	P
<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>	Kentish Plover	W
<i>Charadrius leschenaultii</i>	Greater Sand-Plover	P
<i>Numenius minutus</i>	Little Curlew	P
<i>Limosa limosa</i>	Black-tailed Godwit	P
<i>Tringa erythropus</i>	Spotted Redshank	W
<i>Tringa totanus</i>	Common Redshank	W
<i>Tringa nebularia</i>	Common Greenshank	P
<i>Tringa ochropus</i>	Green Sandpiper	W
<i>Tringa glareola</i>	Wood Sandpiper	P
<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	Common Sandpiper	P
<i>Gallinago stenura</i>	Pintail Snipe	P
<i>Gallinago megala</i>	Swinhoe's Snipe	P
<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	Common Snipe	W
<i>Scolopax rusticola</i>	Eurasian Woodcock	W
<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>	Pied Avocet	P
<i>Glareola maldivarum</i>	Oriental Pratincole	P
<i>Larus (argentatus) vegae</i>	Vega Gull	W
<i>Larus ridibundus</i>	Common Black-headed Gull	W
<i>Chlidonias leucopterus</i>	White-winged Tern	P
<i>Sterna albifrons</i>	Little Tern	P
<i>Streptopelia orientalis</i>	Oriental Turtle-Dove	R
<i>Streptopelia chinensis</i>	Spotted Dove	R
<i>Cuculus canorus</i>	Common Cuckoo	S
<i>Cuculus saturatus</i>	Oriental Cuckoo	S
<i>Asio otus</i>	Long-eared Owl	W
<i>Asio flammeus</i>	Short-eared Owl	W
<i>Caprimulgus indicus</i>	Grey Nightjar	S
<i>Apus pacificus</i>	Fork-tailed Swift	P
<i>Alcedo atthis</i>	Common Kingfisher	R
<i>Halcyon smyrnensis</i>	White-throated Kingfisher	R*
<i>Halcyon pileata</i>	Black-capped Kingfisher	S
<i>Eurystomus orientalis</i>	Dollarbird	S
<i>Upupa epops</i>	Hoopoe	P
<i>Jynx torquilla</i>	Eurasian Wryneck	P
<i>Picoides canicapillus</i>	Grey-capped Woodpecker	R

Key

W - winter migrant
P - passage migrant
R - resident

W* - occasional winter migrant
S - summer migrant
R* - occasional resident

We suggest the adoption of a conservation strategy which might consider the following primary measures.

1. Banning of hunting, purchasing and poisoning birds.
2. Education to increase conservation awareness among local people.
3. Scientific study of the relationship between pesticide usage and levels of accumulation in animal and human tissue.
4. Survey of waterbird numbers at Shi-jiu Lake and in the lower reaches of the Changjiang River to identify areas which should be established as nature conservation areas.

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Birds of Barito Ulu in Borneo

In this article the author describes the results of a joint British/Indonesian survey of Barito Ulu in the heart of Borneo. Their observations include a number of little-known Bornean endemics as well as some rarely-seen species of pheasant.

The Barito Bird Project, an undergraduate expedition, surveyed the birds of the Upper Barito river in central Kalimantan (Indonesian Borneo) see map 1, between 23 July and 14 September 1989. The five team members, three from the UK and two from Indonesia, looked at three sites in an altitudinal range of 300 - 900 m in the study area of Project Barito Ulu.

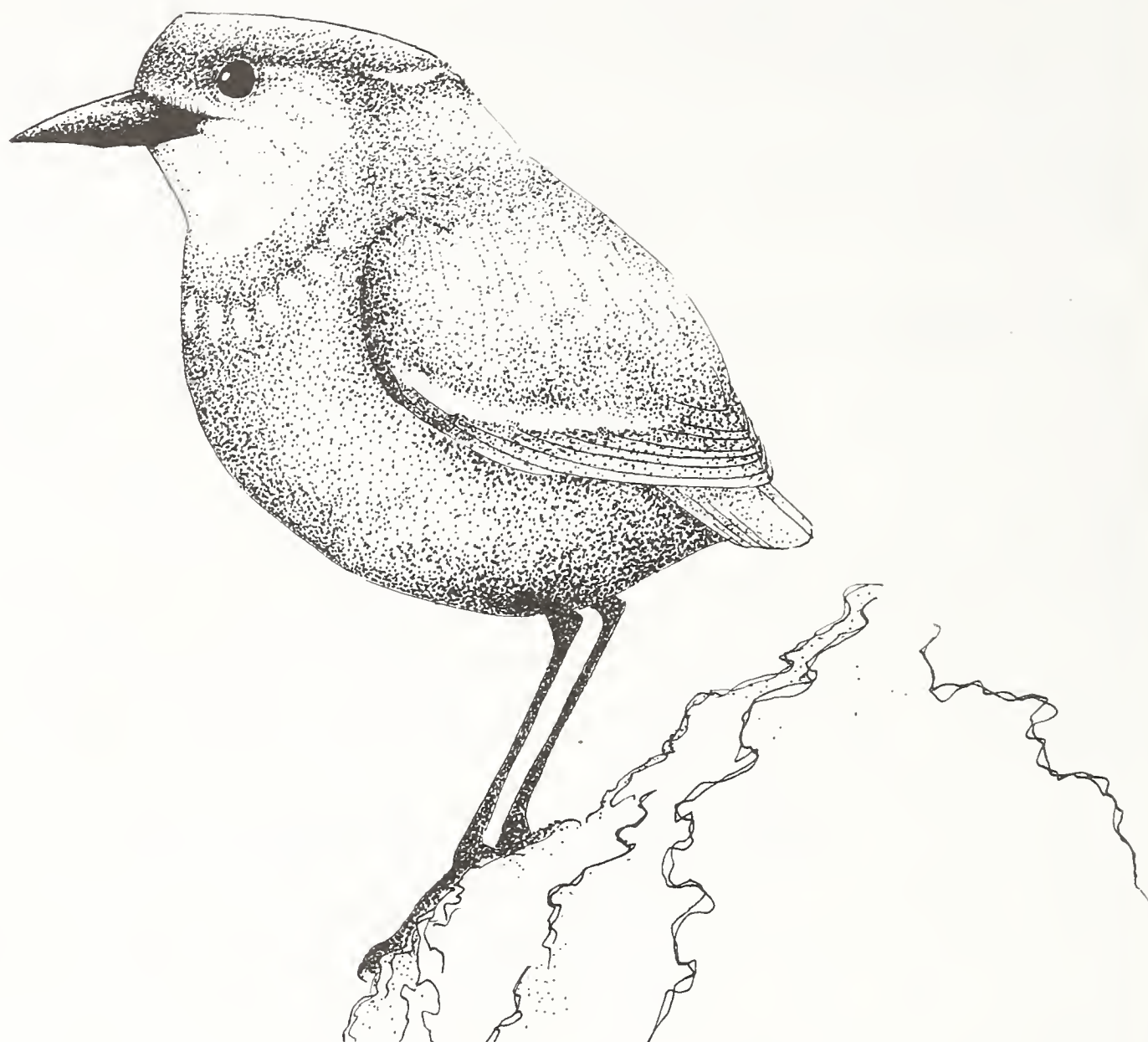
Two sites were beside large rivers at 300 - 500 m. The rivers were fast-flowing with steep banks and few riparian birds; Oriental Darter *Anhinga melanogaster*, Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*, Blue-eared and Common Kingfisher *Alcedo meninting* and *A. atthis* were the only non-passerine birds seen. However, as the rivers narrowed further upstream, Straw-headed Bulbul

Pycnonotus zeylanicus, Chestnut-naped Forktail *Enicurus ruficapillus*, Malaysian Blue Flycatcher *Cyornis turcosa*, and White-chested Babblers *Trichastoma rostratum* were seen regularly on all boat journeys. On two occasions a pair of Blue-banded Kingfishers *Alcedo euryzona* were seen. The Straw-headed Bulbul was particularly common and no evidence was found of the trapping that has decimated populations in more accessible areas. Travelling by boat also proved a good way to see raptors, Oriental Honey-Buzzards *Pernis ptilorhyncus* were the most common, and several Jerdon's Baza *Aviceda jerdoni*, Rufous-bellied Eagles *Hieraaetus kienerii* and Black Eagles *Ictinaetus malayensis* were also seen.

Raptors, pigeons and larger hornbills were also easily observed from a campsite clearing overlooking hillsides across two rivers. Many small passerines were seen here on early morning visits, Rhinoceros Hornbill *Buceros rhinoceros* was seen on most visits, Bat Hawk *Machaeramphus alcinus* and Blyth's Hawk Eagle *Spizaetus alboniger* (the first confirmed record for Kalimantan) were also seen in this area. The clearing had resident Yellow-bellied Prinias *Prinia flaviventris*, Ashy and Rufous-tailed Tailorbirds *Orthotomus ruficeps* and *O. sericeus*, and Dusky Munias *Lonchura fuscans*. Also seen in the area were Pin-tailed Parrotfinch *Erythrura prasina*, White-bellied Munia *Lonchura leucogastra*, and a single Pallas's Warbler *Locustella certhiola* (13 September). Another vantage point was the river where Emerald Dove *Chalcophaps indica*, Oriental Magpie Robin *Copsychus saularis*, and White-rumped Shama *C. malabaricus* were seen on the muddy banks at low water.

The forest in the area was of much lower quality than the more familiar lowland dipterocarp forests of the region; perhaps making birds easier to see and identify, although the population densities seemed to be lower. Up to two hours could be spent without seeing a bird, and mixed species flocks were particularly small and scarce. However, species diversity was high, probably as high as in dipterocarp forest such as that in the Danum Valley, Sabah (north Borneo). We recorded 190 species in four weeks at our base camp out of a site total of 226. Low species densities meant that it was almost impossible to see skulking or retiring species. The endemic Blue-banded Pitta *Pitta arquata*, Blue-headed Pitta *P. baudii*, and Bornean Wren-Babbler *Ptilocichla leucogrammica*, were all heard calling, but not every day, and in total only sixteen sightings were made of these three species. Pheasants were even harder to see: Great Argus *Argusianus argus* were heard daily but never seen, whilst birds of the genus *Lophura* were only heard once definitely. The calls were followed up and resulted in the observation of Crestless Fireback *L. erythrophthalma*; another pair of which was seen later. Crested Fireback *L. ignita* was seen twice and the Bornean endemic, Bulwer's Pheasant *L. bulweri*, three times. Nearly all of these sightings of pheasants were of birds running across paths. Local hunters claimed that the Bornean Peacock-Pheasant *Polyplectron (malacense) schleiermacheri* was also present but was much rarer than other pheasants. Seeing this bird, they said, would involve either a lot of snares or very good luck!

The two sites visited which were between 300 and 500 m had quite a few other hill or submontane species, including 15 of the 'slope specialists' referred to



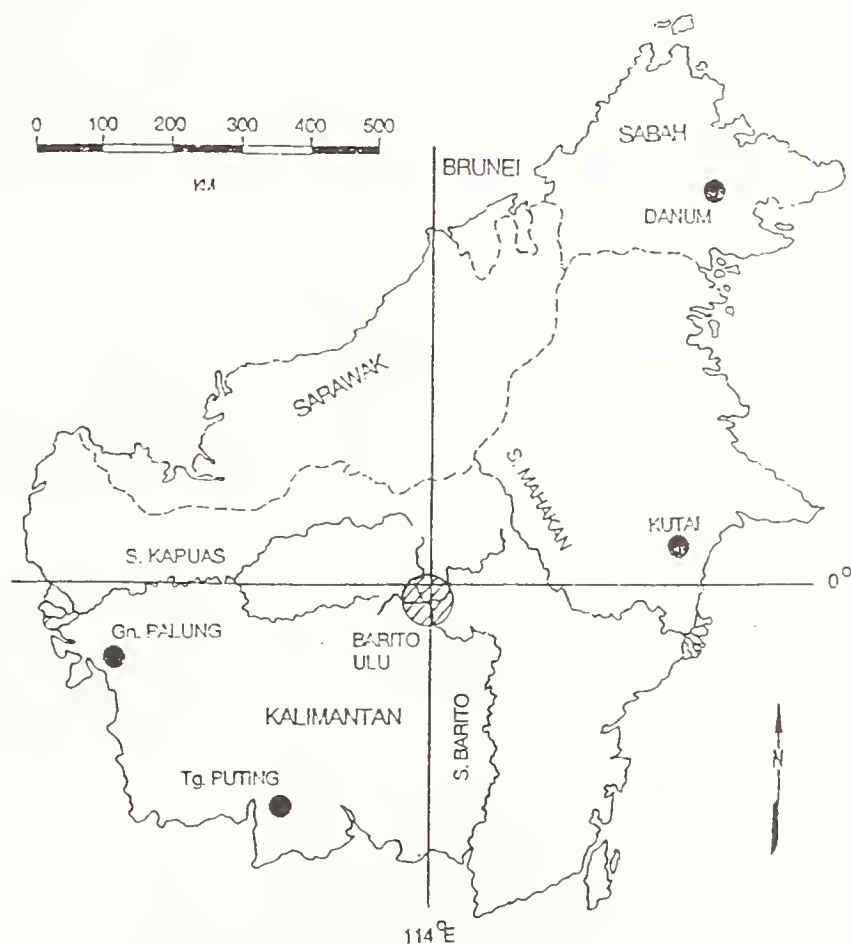
Blue Banded Pitta *Pitta arquata* (by Roger Wilkinson)

in Wells⁶. The most frequently observed were Brown Fulvetta *Alcippe brunneicauda* and Moustached Babbler *Malacopteron magnirostre* and seven species of hornbills. The Oriental Pied Hornbill *Anthracoceros albirostris* was not seen, but this apparently prefers degraded habitats.

Even though the study site was 800 km upriver, none of the surrounding mountains was very high, yet all were difficult to reach. We did spend six days at a site at 800 - 900 m and made some interesting observations of species considered by Wells⁶ to be lowland specialists. For example, Black Magpie *Platysmurus leucopterus* was particularly common here and eight Black Wood-Partridges *Melanoperdix nigra* were seen. The latter species was collected by Büttikofer in 1897 from a nearby mountain¹. It seems therefore, that there may be submontane populations of this 'near threatened'² species which may have been overlooked; further research is needed into its geographical and altitudinal range.

The incidence of Bornean endemics increases with altitude. In addition to eight species seen in the lowlands, another seven endemics were seen here including Red-breasted Partridge *Arborophila hyperythra*, Bornean Whistler *Pachycephala hypoxantha* and Borneo Stubtail *Urosphena (Cettia) whiteheadi*. This seemed to be about the lower altitudinal limit for montane species as they were quite rare and occurred alongside lowland equivalents (for example Mountain and Black-throated Barbets *Megalaima monticola* and *M. eximia* were seen with five other barbet species, and Orange-breasted Trogon *Harpactes oreskios* was seen with three other trogon species). The enigmatic Pygmy White-eye *Oculocincta squamifrons*, a submontane endemic, was seen here once and was also seen once below 100 m elsewhere in Kalimantan. Flycatchers, including Pygmy Blue *Muscicapella hodgsoni*, Rufous-chested *Ficedula dumetoria*, and Rufous-tailed Jungle *Rhinomyias ruficauda*, became more common at higher altitudes. Rufous-winged Flycatcher *Philentoma pyrhopterum* seemed to be replaced by Maroon-breasted Flycatcher *P. velatum* at higher altitudes.

Another interesting discovery was the abundance of Grey-chested Babbler *Malacopteron albogulare* and Hook-billed Bulbul *Setornis criniger*, generally considered to be 'kerangas specialists'^{5,4}. Both were found at all three sites, including dipterocarp forest, a wider habitat range than usually considered³.



Map 1 showing location of Barito Ulu in Kalimantan

Night birds were poorly represented; only Bay Owl *Phodilus badius*, Brown Wood Owl *Strix leptogrammica* and Malaysian Eared Nightjar *Eurostopodus temminckii* were seen. One Malaysian Eared Nightjar was the only bird seen in the forest at night with the aid of a torch. However the lack of night birds was made up for by frequent sightings of Malay Civets *Viverra zibetha*, Greater and Lesser Mouse-Deer *Tragulus napu* and *T. javanicus*, and the occasional Slow Loris *Nycticebus coucang* and Western Tarsier *Tarsier bancanus*. Mammals generally were a highlight of the area; Binturong *Arctictis binturong* and Proboscis Monkeys *Nasalis larvatus* being the most exciting of 38 species identified.

Further details, including a full bird list will be available soon⁷ and a full expedition report should be available by autumn 1990 priced £5 from the author.

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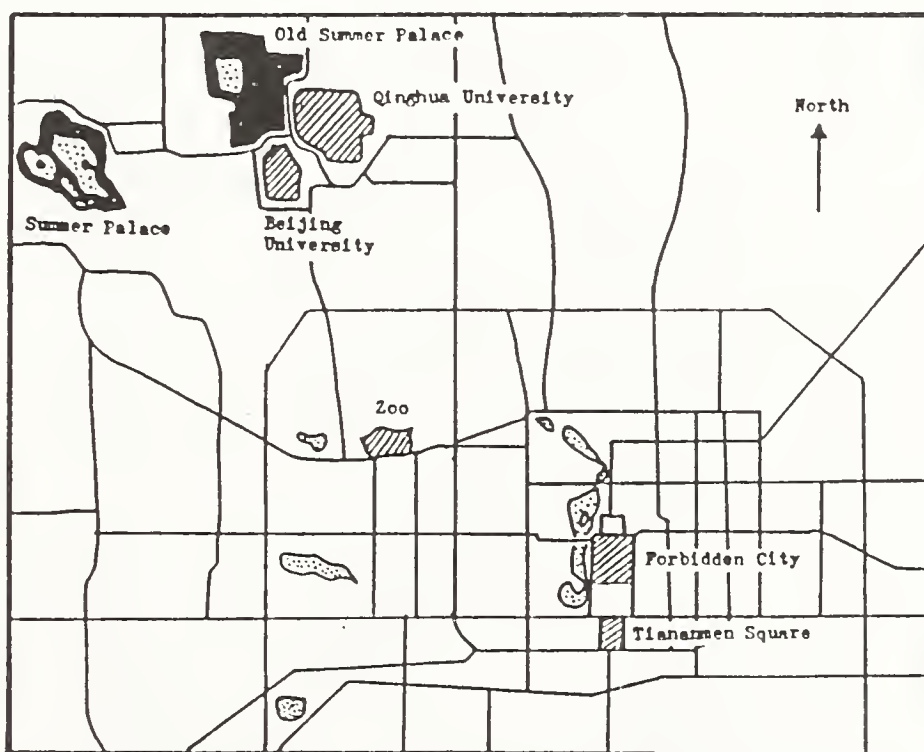
Birdwatching areas

Birdwatching in the Summer Palaces of Beijing

Whilst living in Beijing, John Palfery made frequent visits to the city's summer palaces. In this article he describes how rewarding birdwatching at these sites can be, despite the crowds of people and the background strains of Chinese opera and Richard Clayderman.

Most birdwatchers tend to spend as little time as possible in large cities; however, various locations around the outskirts of Beijing can be quite rewarding. Two such places are the Summer Palace (Yihe Yuan) and the Old Summer Palace (Yuan Ming Yuan). These two large parks are situated close to each other on the north-western edge of the city in the Haidian district (see map 1).

The Summer Palace (see map 2) is a landscaped park covering some 270 ha and comprising several large lakes overlooked by a wooded hill. The woodland habitat attracts passerine migrants and the lakes wintering duck. There are a variety of species typically associated with reed beds around the southern end of the largest lake, the Kunming Lake. The chief glory of birdwatching at the Summer Palace is the duck; it is an excellent place for obtaining good views of them in winter and early spring. From December through to February the lakes are frozen except for the smaller West Lake which usually (although not always) remains ice-free and can hold considerable numbers of duck which tend to favour this lake at all times of year because no boating is allowed.



Map 1 showing locations of the Summer Palaces in Beijing (not to scale).

The Old Summer Palace (see map 3) also has a series of ornamental lakes but they are smaller and all are subject to a great deal of human disturbance and consequently attract no duck. The southern section of the park is being landscaped and planted with shrubs and flowers, but the northern section includes fish ponds, rice-paddy and pockets of woodland and scrub, all of which can attract a variety of passerine migrants, especially in May, and even a few waders.

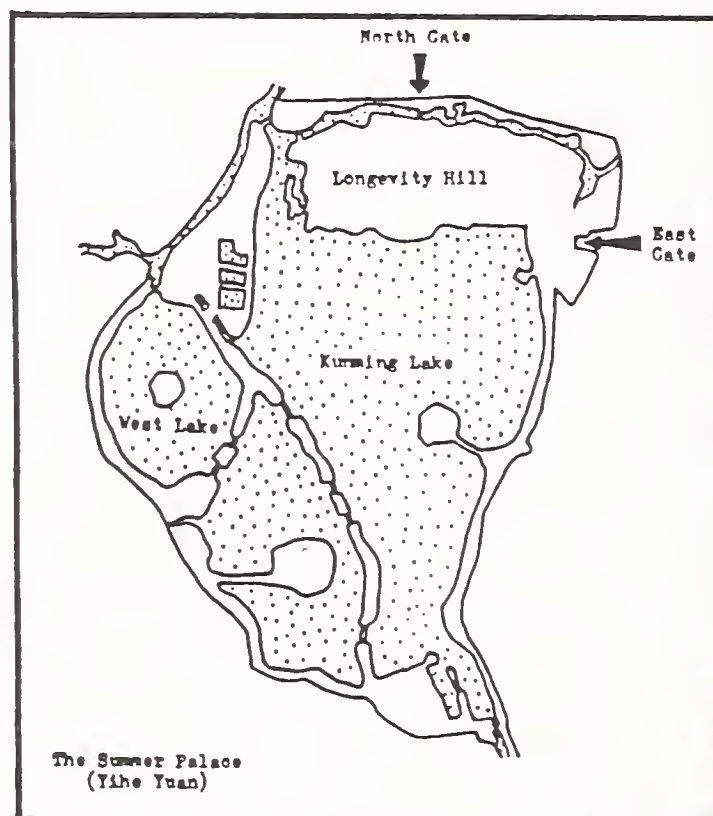
The Summer Palace can be reached by bus 332 from the Beijing zoo and the Old Summer Palace by bus 375 from the north gate of the Summer Palace. Mini-buses also run to the Summer Palace from the Beijing zoo and from the Qianmen Gate on the south side of Tiananmen square.

Both parks are very popular with city residents and so birdwatching is best done very early in the day, especially in the Old Summer Palace. It is worth knowing that for several weeks in October this park is the venue for the mid-autumn festival and during this period it attracts great crowds and opens only at 9am. It is possible to visit both the parks within one day, but it is best to go to the Old Summer Palace first; there are less visitors here but they cause more disturbance. At the Summer Palace visitors tend to concentrate around the principal sights and so even at the end of a busy spring day, there can still be a good selection of passerines in the woodland while the ducks have a safe refuge on the West Lake at all times.

This article is based on my observations between September 1988 and early June 1989. In addition, Dan Duff and Robert Armstrong¹, and Jesper Hornskov have kindly allowed me to use their records.

Summer Palace

Given that most visitors enter the Summer Palace by the east or north gates, the best area to start birdwatching is in the woodland on Longevity Hill. Among



Map 2. Sketch map of the Summer Palace (not to scale)

the resident birds which can be seen here are Spotted Dove *Streptopelia chinensis*, Grey-headed Woodpecker *Picus canus*, Yellow-throated Bunting *Emberiza elegans*, Azure-winged Magpie *Cyanopica cyana* and Large-billed Crow *Corvus macrorhynchos*. A pair of the latter were nest-building in the spring of 1989. Although it is best to explore Longevity Hill early in the morning, it can be worth a visit even at the end of a busy day in the tourist season, for relatively few people wander away from the main paths. However, even on a very early morning visit, birdwatchers cannot expect to have the hill to themselves, for here and there will be elderly people performing the slow, stylized movements of their T'ai Chi exercises.

Spring migrants occurring on the hill include Oriental Turtle-Dove *Streptopelia orientalis*, Indian Cuckoo *Cuculus micropterus*, Dollarbird *Eurystomus orientalis*, Orange-flanked Bush-Robin *Tarsiger cyanurus*, Daurian Redstart *Phoenicurus aureus*, Dark-throated Thrush *Turdus ruficollis*, Dusky Thrush *T. naumanni*, Inornate Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus*, Lemon-rumped Warbler *P. proregulus*, Arctic Warbler *P. borealis*, Two-barred Warbler *P. plumbeitarsus*, Eastern Crowned Warbler *P. coronatus*, Yellow-rumped Flycatcher *P. ficedula zanthopygia*, Red-throated Flycatcher *F. parva*, Grey-streaked Flycatcher *Muscicapa griseisticta*, Asian Brown Flycatcher *M. latirostris*, Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus*, Black-naped Oriole *Oriolus chinensis* and Black Drongo *Dicrurus macrocercus*. In the same area, some winter visitors can be seen in small numbers such as Olive Tree-Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni*, Bohemian Waxwing *Bombycilla garrulus* and Orange-flanked Bush-Robin. Japanese Waxwings *Bombycilla japonica* do occur in the Beijing area in winter but are rarer than Bohemian Waxwings. The occasional Daurian Redstart may over-winter. Yellow-bellied Tit *Parus venustulus* occurs occasionally during the year and large flocks of Daurian Jackdaws *Corvus dauuricus* are present during November and into December.

From December to late February, most of the lakes are frozen. The Kunming Lake is frequented by Beijingers ice-skating, playing hockey or just strolling on the ice, while the West Lake, which is fed with water from the river, is usually more or less ice free and provides a refuge for wintering ducks. Among the species to be seen there are Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea*, Spot-billed Duck *Anas poecilorhyncha*, Common Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula* and Smew *Mergus albellus*. Throughout the spring there are good numbers of Falcated Duck *A. falcata* and Baer's Pochard *Aythya baeri*, with occasional Baikal Teal *A. formosa*, Red-crested Pochard *Netta rufina* and Mandarin Duck *Aix galericulata*. The same species probably occur in autumn, but I was only there infrequently at that time and saw only Baer's Pochard. Spot-billed and Falcated Ducks and Baer's Pochard appear to prefer those lakes adjoining the West Lake rather than the West Lake itself. Early in the morning, before the pleasure boating gets underway, flocks of duck can be seen on the Kunming Lake, but later in the day they retreat to the southern end.

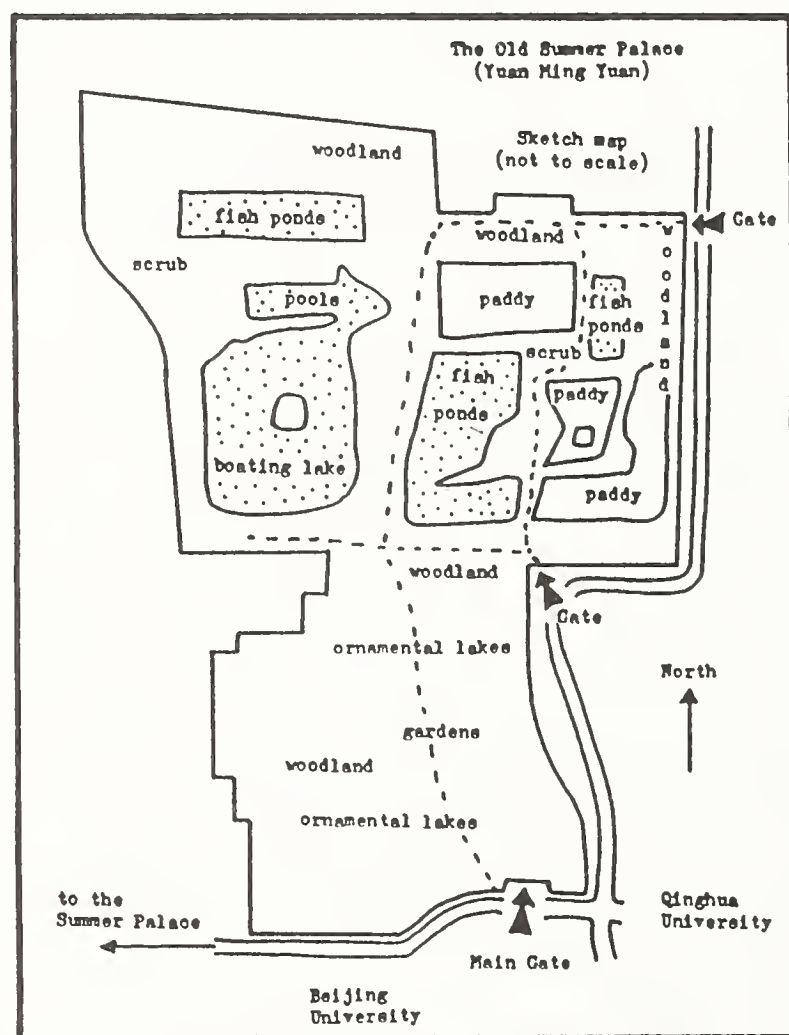
In addition to ducks, Yellow Bittern *Ixobrychus sinensis* and Chinese Pond-Heron *Ardeola bacchus*, summer visitors from May to September, are to be found

among the reeds and floating lotus plants at this end of Kunming Lake. Great Egrets *Egretta alba* sometimes pass through in spring and Vega Gulls *Larus vegae* and Common Terns *Sterna hirundo* can also be seen. Occasionally Amur Falcons *Falco amurensis* fly overhead.

In winter, walking south from the West Lake, flocks of buntings can be found feeding along the lakeside paths, among the trees and in the grassy areas; the area south-west of the Kunming Lake is particularly favoured. Little and Rustic Buntings *Emberiza pusilla* and *E. rustica* are common throughout the winter period and on passage, especially in the autumn. Flocks of Pine Buntings *E. leucocephala* occur from January onwards. Among the reeds a few Pallas's Reed-Buntings *E. pallasi* can be found. In late spring and summer the same reed-beds hold good numbers of breeding Blunt-winged Warblers *Acrocephalus concinens*, Black-browed Reed-Warbler *A. bistrigiceps* and Oriental Reed-Warbler *A. orientalis*.

Old Summer Palace

The Old Summer Palace attracts fewer people than the Summer Palace, almost all of them Chinese. However, they cause more disturbance here than at the Summer Palace and an early morning visit is by far the best. There is also some shooting and trapping. The southern and western sections are a pleasure park with boating pools, gardens, ornamental bridges and paved and gravelled walks. The northern and eastern parts are more natural, comprising rice-paddy,



Map 3. Sketch map of the Old Summer Palace (not to scale)

fish ponds, waste ground, woodland and scrub, together with a few small farming communes. These sections are the most interesting for birdwatching, but unfortunately are disappearing as the landscaped area of the park is extended.

The birds which one can expect to see here are much the same as those at the Summer Palace except that there are no ducks because the ponds and lakes are too disturbed. The best time of year to visit is perhaps the spring, especially in May, when large numbers of passerine migrants can occur. With its flooded rice-paddies, the Old Summer Palace also attracts more migrant waders than the Summer Palace.

From the main gate at the southern end of the Old Summer Palace one can follow the principal road north through the ornamental lakes and gardens to the first fish ponds and then branch off to explore the more natural north-east section, or wander along some of the smaller paths bordering the south-western edge of the park. Here, the woodland and shrubs hold Grey-headed Woodpeckers and Azure-winged Magpies, wintering Olive Tree-Pipits, and in spring and autumn, migrant Dusky and Radde's Warblers *Phylloscopus fuscatus* and *P. schwarzi*.

Birdwatching near the main paths means birdwatching to music. Loudspeakers broadcast a mixture of Chinese opera, instrumental and popular music, and some western music. One group of birdwatchers found themselves observing spring migrants to the strains of Richard Clayderman (Dan Duff, pers. comm.). Other distractions are the models of Red-crowned Cranes and other animals placed on islands in the ornamental lakes. These are especially common at the time of the mid-autumn festival; a time when the Old Summer Palace is best avoided. However, if all this proves too much (it can be like birdwatching in a Chinese version of Disneyland) it is possible to escape to the quieter and more natural areas of the park where a variety of passage migrants can be seen.

In autumn there are Olive Tree-Pipits, Daurian Redstarts, Inornate, Lemon-rumped and Arctic Warblers, Tristram's *Emberiza tristrami*, Little, Rustic and Black-faced *E. spodocephala* Buntings. Several species of pipits occur on passage in spring and autumn, including Richard's Pipit *Anthus novaeseelandiae*¹, Olive Tree-Pipit, Red-throated Pipit *A. cervinus*¹, Water Pipit *A. spinoletta* and Buff-bellied Pipit *A. rubescens*³. Winter birds include Siberian Accentor *Prunella montanella*, Dusky Thrush (most numerous on passage), Vinous-throated Parrotbill *Paradoxornis webbianus* (resident but most obvious in winter), the occasional Chinese Hill Warbler *Rhopophilus pekinensis* and Pine Bunting. Outside the north-western wall of the park is a large rubbish dump which attracts flocks of Daurian Jackdaws, Carrion Crows *Corvus corone* and the occasional Large-billed Crow, all of which loaf in the trees in that area of the park.

Spring brings a good selection of migrants. Red-rumped Swallows *Hirundo daurica* and the occasional Fork-tailed Swift *Apus pacificus* hawk over the pools. Rufous-bellied Woodpecker *Picoides hyperythrus*¹ and Scaly Thrush *Zoothera dauma*¹ have occurred in May. Inornate and Lemon-rumped Warblers are common, calling from every tree. Thick-billed Warblers *Acrocephalus aedon* are abundant for a brief spell in late May, many of them singing. Dusky, Radde's, Arctic, Two-barred and Eastern Crowned Warblers also pass through in late

spring. Flycatchers include Yellow-rumped and Asian Paradise Flycatcher *Terpsiphone paradisi*. Chestnut-flanked White-eye *Zosterops erythropleura* has been recorded, and, in addition to the wintering bunting species, there are Japanese Reed Bunting *Emberiza yessoensis*, Tristram's, Yellow-browed *E. chrysophrys*¹ and Black-faced Buntings¹, all of which also occur in autumn.

Only a few wader species were noted, mostly frequenting the rice-paddy. They included Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius* and Oriental Pratincole *Glareola maldivarum*¹. Grey-headed Lapwing *Vanellus cinereus* has been seen on rice-paddy adjoining the park in April and could well occur there.

Oriental Cuckoo *Cuculus saturatus* probably occurs but only Common Cuckoo *C. canorus* was positively identified. Indian Cuckoo *C. micropterus* is a common summer visitor, arriving in May, when its distinctive call can be heard from patches of woodland all over the park. Other summer visitors are Yellow Bittern, Black-crowned Night-Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*, Chinese Pond-Heron, Brown Shrike *Lanius cristatus*, Black-naped Oriole and Black Drongo, all of which occur from May to September. White-breasted Waterhen *Amaurornis phoenicurus* was noted in the paddy fields in May, June and September and probably breeds there.

Few raptor species were recorded, but included Upland Buzzard *Buteo hemilasius* and Saker Falcon *Falco cherrug* which were seen in winter, and Oriental Honey-Buzzard *Pernis ptilorhynchus*, Black Kite *Milvus migrans*, Pied Harrier *Circus melanoleucos*¹ and Amur Falcon on passage; the latter apparently breeding near Beijing². The best place for seeing raptors on passage in the vicinity of Beijing is the Western Hills.

This article does not attempt to be a comprehensive guide to all the birds recorded at the Summer Palace or Old Summer Palace, for example the full list of buntings recorded amounts to 17 species (Dan Duff, pers. comm) and include Jankowski's Bunting *Emberiza jankowskii*. Nevertheless the two parks cannot compare in diversity with other birdwatching sites in the north-east China, but they do offer a useful introduction to the birds of the area and are the most readily accessible sites in or around Beijing. Moreover, the eastern Palearctic ducks are probably seen better and more easily on the lakes of the Summer Palace than anywhere else. Also, there is always the chance of seeing more unusual species; Chinese Thrush *Turdus mupinensis* and Golden-spectacled Warbler *Seicercus burkii* have both been recorded at the Old Summer Palace.

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Little-known Oriental Bird



MOUNTAIN SERIN

This serin, first described in 1901, is now known from isolated mountains in Sumatra, Java, Sulawesi and Mindanao. In this article Peter Clements describes what is known about its plumage, habitat and food.

The Mountain Serin *Serinus estherae* is a scarce or infrequently recorded bird which inhabits alpine meadows and mountain forests of Java, Sumatra and Sulawesi in Indonesia, and Mindanao in the Philippines. Apart from a few specimen skins in museums it has been seen in the wild on only a few occasions by ornithologists. It has only been photographed once, the nest and eggs are undescribed and very little is known of its behaviour or food.

The serin was first described, as *Crithagra Estherae*, from a female specimen collected from Mt. Pangrango near Bogor, western Java at 1820 m by M. Bartels on 11 March 1901¹⁰. A further four birds (two pairs) were collected during the next two years from the same locality, again by Bartels¹¹. Birds of this nominate race have been seen more frequently since: in January, March and July 1982, November 1983, August 1984^{1,3} and there have been more recent sightings in the late 1980s, principally from the Cibodas - Gunung Gede Nature Reserve which is probably the place in which it is easiest to see the species.

In April 1939 S. D. Ripley collected 10 birds which were similar to *S. estherae* at 2,300 m on Blangbeké, northern Sumatra. These were described as a new subspecies *vanderbilti* in June 1939¹⁶. This represented a range extension of about 1,400 km from the original locality and was all the more surprising as collecting expeditions had until then failed to find any other specimens of the bird in other parts of Java or central Sumatra. In February 1937, A. Hoogerwerf had collected two males and two females at 3,400 m on nearby Mt. Leuser in northern Sumatra and these were described in July 1939 as *ripleyi*^{5,7} now synonymised with *vanderbilti*. Up to 1988 this race had only been recorded on one other occasion, on 5 April 1978 when a flock of four was photographed by N. van Strein in the Gunung Leuser National Park, 65 km south-east of Mt. Leuser¹⁵. From the information currently available it seems that this is the only time that the bird has been photographed.

In July 1939 A. C. V. van Bemmelen collected eight birds (six males and two females) of a previously unknown race of *S. estherae* between 2,300 m and 2,400 m on Gunung Ajekajek and Gunung Iderider in the Tengger mountains in eastern Java. These were later described by Chasen as *S. e. orientalis*⁶. Birds of this race were subsequently found slightly further east on the Ijang Highlands¹³.

Whilst it was not so surprising that two races of what is probably a relict or very specialised species should occur on high ground on adjoining islands (albeit many miles apart) separated only by a narrow channel, the next discovery of a race more distantly to the north was certainly unexpected. On 19 April 1960 a male was collected by R. B. Gonzales on Mount Katanglad in central Mindanao, Philippines. This specimen was later described as a further new race *S. e. mindanensis*¹⁹. Since then this race has been recorded only on three other occasions: in 1966 when four specimens including at least one female, were collected by H. Bregulla on Mt. Katanglad^{18,20}; in April 1980 when four were seen together at 1,800 m on Mt. Apo; and in February 1983 when a flock of eight was seen at 1650 m on Mt. Apo⁹.

The last race was discovered as recently as 6 August 1980 when C. Krause, a collector for the Museum Alexander Koenig in Bonn, saw several small flocks of up to six birds at 2,300 m on Gng. Rantekombola in Sulawesi and collected one (a male). This bird was subsequently described as *S. e. renatae*²⁰.

There have been three or four other records of this species in Lore Lindu National Park, Sulawesi, in September 1980, March 1981 and July 1985 and possibly in April 1979^{3,21,22}. Bruce²² suggested that this population may represent another undescribed subspecies.

Several authors have proposed full species status for one or more of the presently accepted races (principally *mindanensis*)^{19,24}, but since many of the structural and plumage characters are shared, it is more often treated as a widely but thinly distributed species. Whether there are further as yet undiscovered races or populations is a matter for speculation. In the 1930s M. A. Lieftinck reported the species from Mt. Temojo, south of Semarang in central Java, but there are no specimens or other reports from this region⁶.

The Mountain Serin bears an obvious resemblance to the European Serin *Serinus serinus* and is easy to identify because it is the only green fringillid on the islands where it has been recorded. Males of the nominate race have the forehead yellow, crown and nape greyish-brown and the mantle, back and scapulars unstreaked olive-brown tinged with grey. The rump is golden or bright yellow and the upper tail-coverts similar but with dark centres. The tail is similar to that of the European Serin, short and slightly forked at the tip, and dark or blackish-brown. The wings are similar in colour but have two thin pale yellow wing-bars formed by the tips of the coverts. The face markings and size of the bill are important in the separation of the races. In the nominate race the region of the lores and around the eyes is strikingly white, the cheeks and ear-coverts are a light grey-brown with the malar region and upper chin faintly yellow. The lower chin and throat are brown or brownish. The breast is white or pale buffish-white with dark or brown spotting extending as streaks onto the flanks, and the belly is plain white. The bill is dark or olive-brown on the upper mandible and pale brown on the lower. The legs and feet are brown to dark brown.

Females are similar to the males but have the yellow on the rump much duller and tend to be less spotted on the breast and lack any suggestion of a

malar stripe. The immature has not been described (but see *vanderbilti* below).

The call is 'a dull metallic chittering' note³ and in flight a 'short tinkling song resembling *Zosterops a. atricapilla*'¹⁷.

S. e. vanderbilti has a small bill (the smallest of all the races), dark lores, wholly dark or brown chin and throat and only a very narrow area of white around the eye. The flight feathers are very narrowly edged with white and the breast is yellow with dark brown streaks. Females of this race are similar to the males but with less yellow in the plumage. They are browner above and on the chin and throat^{16,17}. The immature is similar to the adult female but has bright yellow on the rump and upper tail-coverts, a pale brown or greyish-brown collar around the nape and the central tail feathers are edged narrowly with white. Yellow on the breast is lacking.

Both sexes of *orientalis* resemble the nominate race but the bill is slightly smaller and less robust looking. In the male the yellow on the malar area is less extensive and does not cross the chin, the lores are dark and there is a small or poorly defined white ring around the eye. The wing-bars are very pale yellow. The breast is yellow streaked with black (as in *vanderbilti*) and the streaks on the flanks are slightly more prominent than in *estherae*. One of the two known females of this race lacks any yellow on the underparts⁶.

S. e. mindanensis is by far the darkest of the races with blackish-brown upperparts and greenish-olive edges to the mantle, back and scapulars. The rump and upper tail-coverts are golden yellow. The upper forehead to the crown is also golden yellow extending to the cheeks, malar region, throat and breast. The area around the eye is dark. The tips to the wing-coverts are also bright golden-



Mountain Serin *Serinus estherae* (by Richard Grimmett)

yellow. The rest of the underparts are dull or off-white with thin or fine dark brown streaks on the flanks. The bill is much more blunt than in the previous races with a curved or arched ridge to the upper mandible¹⁹.

S. e. renatae is very similar to *vanderbilti* except that it has a large or heavy-looking bill (the largest of all races), dark lores and little or no white around the eye, and the chin and throat are brown or dark brown. In July 1985 K. D. Bishop and B. King saw three birds (presumably of this race) on Gunung Rorekatimbu on which all the yellow in the plumage, the forecrown, rump and upper tail-coverts and base of the tail, upper wing-coverts and edges of the tertials was replaced with brilliant red-orange. Whether this remarkable sighting refers to only a few individuals within the population of *renatae* or is yet another undescribed race has yet to be determined^{3,20}.

Mountain Serins have been found mainly in alpine or sub-alpine grasslands, heather dominated meadows with scattered bushes or scrub above the tree-line between 1400 m and 3400 m. However in Lore Lindu National Park, Sulawesi, it has been found in *Agathis* dominated upper montane forest^{2,21}, and in western Java it is usually in the tops of tall trees in mossy montane rain forests.^{1,3} Little is known about its food, but on one occasion birds were seen feeding on the flowers of a large white terrestrial orchid³, birds have been noted in trees of *Strobilanthes cernua* and *Casuarina junghuniana*¹², and MacKinnon¹⁴ stated that the diet consists of seeds and berries. Most reports mention that the birds seen were in small flocks of up to eight but there are also records of single birds. It is a shy and retiring species, spending long periods sitting on the ground or in low bushes. Its flight is fast and typically undulating.

The taxonomic affinities of the species have long been a subject of uncertainty with considerable doubt having been cast on its placement in *Serinus*. It appears to be midway between *Serinus* and *Carduelis*, having some features which place it closer to Vietnamese Greenfinch *Carduelis monguilloti* (also of uncertain taxonomic status)⁸. A separate genus *Chrysocorythus* for *estherae* has been proposed²³. *Serinus* is principally an African genus but there are two species in Asia apart from *estherae*, the Fire-fronted Serin *S. pusillus* and Tibetan Serin *S. thibetanus*, which appear to bridge the gulf between Africa and Indonesia. In some respects, it is similar to a relict African species, the Ankober Serin *S. ankoberensis*, recently discovered in Ethiopia² which inhabits the sub-alpine scrub of a few treeless mountain tops and is very little known.

Various English names have been applied to this species. Malay Goldfinch^{1,14,21} and Malay Serin¹⁵ are inappropriate because the species is not closely related to *Carduelis carduelis* and the ambiguity of the term 'Malay'. It has also been called Javan Greenfinch⁴, Sunda Serin³ and Indonesian Serin²², but the recently proposed Mountain Serin⁹ is perhaps the most suitable name considering its distribution and habitat.

This short review of the Mountain Serin has been compiled from data collected for a forthcoming monograph on 'Finches' to be published by Christopher Helm in 1992. Anyone with any additional information, unpublished records, possible sightings or photographs is asked to contact the author.

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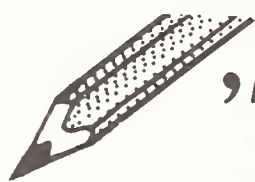
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'To the Editor'

Which Flycatchers Winter in the Western Ghats?

Recent reports of Kashmir Flycatcher and Red-breasted Flycatchers (*Ficedula subrubra* and *F. parva*) from the Western Ghats have gone some way towards clarifying their winter distribution.

There can now be no doubt that *F. subrubra* occurs regularly in the Nilgiri hills in winter (*OBC Bull.* 2. p.36 and *OBC Bull.* 11 P.42) though, contrary to the statement in *Bulletin* 11 p.42, there remains an absence of reports between here and its chief wintering ground in Sri Lanka. *F. parva albicilla* was known as a rare straggler into the intervening Cardamom hills area and this was confirmed by my recent sighting in the Periyar National Park on 22 and 23 November 1989.

I will be returning to the Western Ghats in February next year and will keep a special look-out for these birds. Other members with experience of the southern half of the Western Ghats in winter may be able to elucidate the position further.

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On Sandwich Terns in India

I would like to make a comment regarding the sighting of a Sandwich Tern in south India that appeared in the latest issue of the *Bulletin* (*OBC Bull.* 11 P.42). This species had been recorded from the state of Tamil Nadu in the past. Dr R. S. Lal Mohan of Mandapam has seen more than three birds in the area and

caught a Russian-ringed bird. Russian-ringed birds have also been collected on the west coast at Goa and Kerala. In addition, there have been recent sightings in Kerala. The evidence now seems to suggest that this species is a common and probably a very numerous species wintering all along the coastline of India, especially down the west coast and up the east coast to Tamil Nadu. There is so far no information available about the occurrence of this species further north on the east coast or along the coast of Bangladesh.

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Notes on the Luzon Wren-Babbler

The last issue of the *Bulletin* contained a record of two Luzon Wren-Babblers *Napothera rabori*, observed by Frank Lambert on 16 January this year (*OBC Bull.* 11 p.46). Unaware of this recent sighting I observed one in Quezon National Park on two successive days 5 and 6 March 1990. As the bird is so rare, I thought it would be useful to publish some details with a sketch I made of the bird.



Luzon Wren-Babbler *Napothera rabori* (by Jowi de Roever)

Wren-Babblers live on the dark, densely overgrown, forest floor where they are difficult to observe. It is not surprising therefore, that in the Philippines, a country which has not yet attracted many birdwatchers, the Luzon Wren-Babbler has not been observed in the wild until very recently. The species has been known since 1960 when one specimen was collected on Luzon, Philippines. In 1967 and 1970 two other specimens were collected at different localities on Luzon. All three have been identified as separate subspecies in J.E. Du Pont's *Philippine Birds*. In addition to Frank Lambert's records, I have been told that, not long ago, the species was seen on Mount Isarog on the southern tip of Luzon.

Quezon National Park is probably the most frequently visited birdwatching area in the Philippines because of its proximity to Manila and its easy accessibility. The park has been described in this *Bulletin* by Jelle Scharringa (*OBC Bull.* 8 p.20-22) and that information is still valid, except that the army now occupies a campsite near the top of the road, and that the Golden Shower Hotel is more overgrown and will soon be closed.

I first noticed the bird in the late morning halfway along the flat part of the summit trail. As the bird walked slowly under and over a couple of logs fallen across the track, my wife Cynthia and I managed to get some short, but good views. The next day I located it again a few 100 metres closer to the main road. This time it ran immediately into the forest but I was able to relocate the bird. It walked quietly between the trunks and after some minutes it sneaked away and then ran again, perhaps because it noticed me. This sneaking and running was repeated several times. To my surprise I could refind the bird each time.

The bird looked like its picture in duPont: dark brown wings with some scattered white spots, dark brown tail, grey cheeks with narrow white streaks, large white throat with a faint dark malar stripe, dark grey bill and light brown legs. However, compared to the picture, the brown colour of crown and back was lighter red-brown and the dark grey breast extended higher onto the upper breast. Flanks and undertail were dark, but I did not see the exact colour, nor that of its belly. Most remarkable was the way the bird walked: deliberately, with the tail cocked straight up, like a small rail or even more resembling a South American ant-thrush.

Knowing that the park is a small isolated patch of forest apparently holding a population of wren-babblers and realising how many birdwatchers have spent days there scouring the ground for Bleeding-Heart Pigeon and Ashy Ground-Thrush, one can imagine how small the chance is of coming across a Luzon Wren-Babbler. Fortunately, there are other birds to be seen in the Philippines besides this one!

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Reviews....Reviews.....

(No author). 1986. **Birds of Yü-lin National Park.** [Hu Ying Yu Ming Yin Shan Lin]. Pp 286. 241 colour plates. Taipei: Interior Ministry Dept. of Works, Yü-shan National Park Management Office. NT\$500. Paperback. [In Chinese].

This attractive volume is a photographic record of the birds of Yü-shan (Jade Mountain) National Park in mountainous central Taiwan. The Park covers 105,490 hectares and is over 3,500 metres above sea level at its highest point. But despite its varied birdlife and spectacular scenery, the area is probably not as well known to foreign ornithologists as it deserves.

The colour photographs of 262 species are generally of high quality, and for many species there is more than one photo. A very small number of photographs appear to be of captive birds, e.g. that of the endemic Swinhoe's Pheasant *Lophura swinhoi* (p. 44), but this does not detract from the overall quality of the book. Some 14 endemics are illustrated, including such delights as the Flamecrest *Regulus goodfellowi*, Steere's Liocichla *Liocichla steeri*, Taiwan Magpie *Urocissa caerulea* and Taiwan Barwing *Actinodura morrisoniana*. A further five species are listed but not illustrated. There are short articles on habitat and topography, but unfortunately there is no map. There is also a checklist of the birds of Taiwan, naming 413 species plus unconfirmed records (14 species), "hypothetical" species (12) and escapes. The text is in Chinese, but the captions and checklist give English and scientific names. The Taiwanese Government is to be congratulated on publishing a book of this quality, and it is to be hoped that an English edition will follow.

Michael Rank

Jean C Roche's recording of **Forests and mountains of Asia**, Sittelle, Chateaubois, 38350 La Mure, France. 70 minutes. £8.95 cassette, £13.99 compact disc.

This publication, available as a cassette or compact disc, consists of a selection of wildlife recordings made during the author's travels in the Orient between 1976 and 1981. The recordings include about sixty species of birds but also mammals, amphibians and insects. They were made at a selection of well known localities

in the region including Omei Shan (China), Taman Negara (Malaysia), Khao Yai National Park (Thailand) and around Pokhara (Nepal).

The sounds have been skilfully remixed and are presented as evocative montages of dawn and evening choruses in the jungle. The effect is very atmospheric and natural. Although this recording is not meant as a formal identification guide (there are no announcements between species) it provides a useful learning tool as one hears the sounds as they would be heard in the forest as opposed to filtered single species sounds found on formal sound field guides. To help the listener in this respect it would have been better had the scientific names and not simply the English names been provided on the sleeve notes.

As is pointed out on the sleeve notes, only the species featured in the foreground of each recording is listed and there are plenty of other calls in the middle and far-distance to be identified too!

Jon Eames

(This recording is available from BIRD RECORDING SERVICES [BRS], P O Box 942, London E10 6RZ, UK and the price quoted is a special introductory offer. Please see announcements pages for details. Eds.)

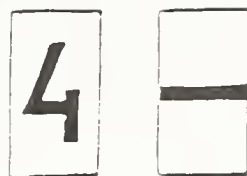
Announcements & Requests

Have you seen this bird?

In July 1990, the Asian Wetland Bureau and Kyung Hee University, Seoul, colour banded 82 fledgling Chinese Egrets *Egretta eulophotes* on Shin Islet, South Korea. The birds were marked using red or white colour bands, with codes of one, two or three horizontal bands and a digit (0 - 9) repeated on three sides of the ring.

Information is urgently required on this endangered Red Data Book species and anyone who has made sightings of these colour-banded birds or a repeated sighting of the same bird are urged to send in their records even if information is incomplete. Please include the colour and code of rings on left and right legs, the date of the observation, the locality with co-ordinates if possible, a brief description of the habitat type it was in and the observers name and address.

Records should be returned to Colin Poole, Asian Wetland Bureau, Institute for Advanced Studies, University of Malaya, 59100 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.



Bird Sound Recordings Available

Bird Recording Services have available a number of sound recordings which may be of interest to members of the Club.

Forests and Mountains of Asia by Jean C. Roche (1990), which is reviewed in this Bulletin, is available on one C70 stereo cassette JR34411 priced £8.95 or on one 70 minute stereo compact disc JR34408 priced £13.99. Both of these prices are an introductory offer.

Joe T. Marshall's 1987 recording *Systematics of smaller Asian night-birds based on voice* is available on record AOU 25 priced £9.95 and *A field guide to the bird songs of south east Asia* by Terry White/National Sound Archive (1984) is available on two cassettes with an accompanying booklet NSA C1/2 priced £14.00.

All these recordings are available from Bird Recording Services who will donate 10% of the retail price to OBC's conservation fund for each sale made through the Club.

On orders within the EEC please add £1 for orders up to £15 and £2 for orders over £15 to cover postage and packing. If you are ordering from outside the EEC, please request a proforma invoice.

Please send your order with payment to BRS/OBC Offer, P.O. Box 942, London, E10 6RZ, England.

Asian Crane Congress 1989

The Asian Crane Congress 1989 was held in December at the Saurashtra University, Rajkot which is located in the centre of the Saurashtra region of Gujarat, India - a region now well-known as an important wintering ground for cranes. More than 130 delegates attended from India, China, USSR, Iran, Spain, England, USA and Malaysia.

The main theme of the Congress was to consider issues related to the status, distribution, migratory routes, breeding biology and conservation of five species of cranes that spend the winter in or inhabit the Indian subcontinent; Siberian Crane *Grus leucogeranus*, Common Crane *G. grus*, Demoiselle Crane *Anthropoides virgo*, Black-necked Crane *G. nigricollis*, and Sarus Crane *G. antigone*.

The need to identify and protect wetlands was considered an immediate priority. The possibility of increased international co-operation for studying migratory routes of cranes and conservation of their habitats was recognised.

That the flock of Siberian Cranes which usually winters at a single site, the Keoladeo National Park at Bharatpur, India, is in a precarious situation, was discussed in detail. The decreasing trend in the number of birds that winter in Bharatpur suggests that the population is likely to decline further. It was proposed at the Congress that appropriate steps should be taken immediately to understand their migration, problems the birds face during migration, management of wintering sites and the cause for the decline in numbers. In the last two years there has been a tendency for the birds to arrive at Bharatpur and then to disappear for the rest of the winter to unknown sites. It was therefore considered important to identify these sites and protect them if necessary.

There was much interest in the possible use of satellite tracking using the Argos satellite for charting the precise migratory route of the Siberian Crane. However, given that the species is endangered, it was agreed that this technology should be first tested on Common Cranes or Sarus Cranes.

Increased encroachment into wetlands and marshes by agriculture, grazing land and other activities was considered to be the cause of lost habitats for the Sarus and Black-necked Cranes both of which depend on wetlands for breeding. The Sarus Crane seems to be adapting to the situation by increasingly using paddy fields for nesting but in doing so they often cause damage to the standing crop which is not always tolerated by farmers. Increased use of pesticides was considered dangerous for cranes that feed on farm crops.

The effect of drought on cropping patterns in different regions of the subcontinent was discussed in relation to changing wintering populations of cranes. The trend in the last few years has been that cranes have been counted in increasing numbers in the southern states where populations were relatively unknown before.

The increasing numbers of crane strikes with transmission lines received some attention and the need to identify potentially dangerous lines and to get them fitted with high visibility markers was proposed.

Among the wide-ranging set of resolutions drawn up, the following were the most noteworthy.

- 1) to form an international crane action task force
- 2) to help conserve Siberian Cranes on migration
- 3) to improve habitat for wintering Siberian Cranes at Bharatpur and at the alternative sites the birds have started to use
- 4) to protect the wintering flocks of Siberian Cranes at Feredoonkenar in Iran
- 5) to protect the habitat of the Black-necked Crane in Ladakh, India

6) to promote the conservation of the Sarus Crane in India and Nepal.

The Congress was followed by a four-day workshop on wetland field study techniques, conducted in association with the Asian Wetland Bureau. Thirty five university and college students, forest department staff and people from various other disciplines were given intensive training on subjects ranging from wetland classification and mangroves to bird identification and enumeration.

Media coverage of the Congress in India ensured that awareness of the plight of cranes and their habitat was greatly increased.

The Congress was sponsored by a number of international and national conservation bodies including the International Crane Foundation, World Wide Fund for Nature - India, Bombay Natural History Society, Gujarat Nature Conservation Society, and the Government of Gujarat. A large number of contributions were received from local industrialists and companies.
(contributed by Taej Mundkur)



INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL FOR BIRD PRESERVATION
FAUNA & FLORA PRESERVATION SOCIETY
CONSERVATION EXPEDITION COMPETITION



ARE YOU PLANNING AN EXPEDITION TO A DEVELOPING COUNTRY ?
DO YOU AIM TO MAKE A CONTRIBUTION TO WILDLIFE CONSERVATION ?
ARE YOU INVOLVING LOCAL PEOPLE IN YOUR WORK ?

THEN YOU COULD BE ELIGIBLE FOR A £3,000 *BP CONSERVATION EXPEDITION AWARD*

Each year, a total of £20,000 in grant funding is available through the *ICBP/FFPS Conservation Expedition Competition* in the following categories: *Tropical Rainforests, Wetlands, Oceanic Islands and Marine and Globally Threatened Species*. First prize in each category is £3,000 (half of which should be intended for local counterparts). There are also eight prizes of £1,000 for runners-up. All prize winners will automatically receive official ICBP/FFPS endorsement.

Applicants should follow the guidelines set out in the *ICBP/FFPS Conservation Expedition Guide*, which also provides important practical advice on how to organise an expedition. The competition is open to all expeditions involving young people and fulfilling the criteria above. Please write in the first instance (enclosing an A5 SAE) to: Gary Allport, Expeditions Officer, ICBP, 32 Cambridge Road, Girton, Cambridge CB3 0PJ, UK. Final applications must be submitted in English by 31 December 1990.



THE BP CONSERVATION EXPEDITION AWARDS



Recent Reports

These are largely unconfirmed records covering the period from January to July 1990. A few additional records are included for winter 1989-90. We urge that if they have not already done so, contributors provide full details to the relevant regional organisations in due course.

INDIA

Some interesting news on the occurrence of wintering Demoiselle Cranes *Anthropoides virgo* in peninsular India was received from SH. A flock of c. 300 birds was observed descending onto cultivated land in the fork of the rivers Bhima and Krishna west of Yagdir, north-east Karnataka, along with another flock of c. 150 seen at close quarters nearby, on 21 January. Additional records were reported by the Indian Express newspaper of Bangalore which published a note stating that wintering Demoiselle Cranes returned to the vicinity of Bidar, in the extreme north of Karnataka on 20 January. The note also referred to sightings in the same area in 1985, 86 and 88.

INDONESIA

Bali

Whilst on a recent trip to Bali, RN recorded two species in the Bali Barat National Park which may be new for the island. A Hodgson's Hawk-Cuckoo *Cuculus fugax* was observed in a small patch of mangroves near Teluk Terima on 8 January and a Yellow-rumped Flycatcher *Ficedula zanthopygia* in secondary growth about 50 m from the beach at Teluk Telor on 10 January.

Banda and Flores Seas

Hundreds of Streaked Shearwaters *Calonectris leucomelas* were observed in mid-June (BC, FL, KB).

Gunungapi, Banda Sea

Birds found on the island on 14 June included Sooty Tern *Sterna fuscata* and Lesser Frigatebird *Fregata ariel*, two species not previously recorded as breeding at this important bird colony (BC, KB, FL).

Gunungapi, Wetar

On a boat journey between these two places on 14 June sightings were made of a Bulwer's Petrel *Bulweria bulwerii*; only the third for Wallacea (BC, FL), and several Matsudaira's Storm-Petrels *Oceanodroma matsudairae* following the boat (BC, FL, KB).

Komoda, Bali

There were also interesting observations made during another inter-island boat journey on 18 June. At least 25 Wilson's Storm-Petrels *Oceanites oceanicus* (FL, BC, KB) and c. five White-faced Storm-Petrels *Pelagodroma marina* were seen (BC, FL); the latter representing the first record for Wallacea.

Morotai, Moluccas

Calls believed to be those of Helmeted Friarbird *Philemon buceroides*, a species not previously known to occur on this island, were heard in coastal forest 5-10 km north of Pilowo on 9 June (KB, FL).

Seram, Moluccas

The Lazuli Kingfisher *Halcyon lazuli* was found to be relatively common in lowland logged forest areas inland from Wahai (KB, BC, FL) on 12 June.

Wetar

A short visit to this island, the first by ornithologists since 1911, was made by KB, BC and FL. A number of interesting species were observed in recently logged forest near the coast north of Perai. They included at least four Bonelli's Eagles *Hieraaetus fasciatus*, Dusky Cuckoo-Dove *Macropygia magna*, Black Cuckoo-Dove *Turacoena modesta*, Olive-shouldered Parrot *Aprosmictus jonquillaceus*, Fawn-breasted Whistler *Pachycephala orpheus*, Plain Flyeater *Gerygone inornata*, Black-chested Honeyeater *Lichmera notabilis*, Wetar Figbird *Sphecotheres (viridis) hypoleucos*, Olive-brown Oriole *Oriolus melanotis* and Tricoloured Parrotfinch *Erythrura tricolor*.

NEPAL

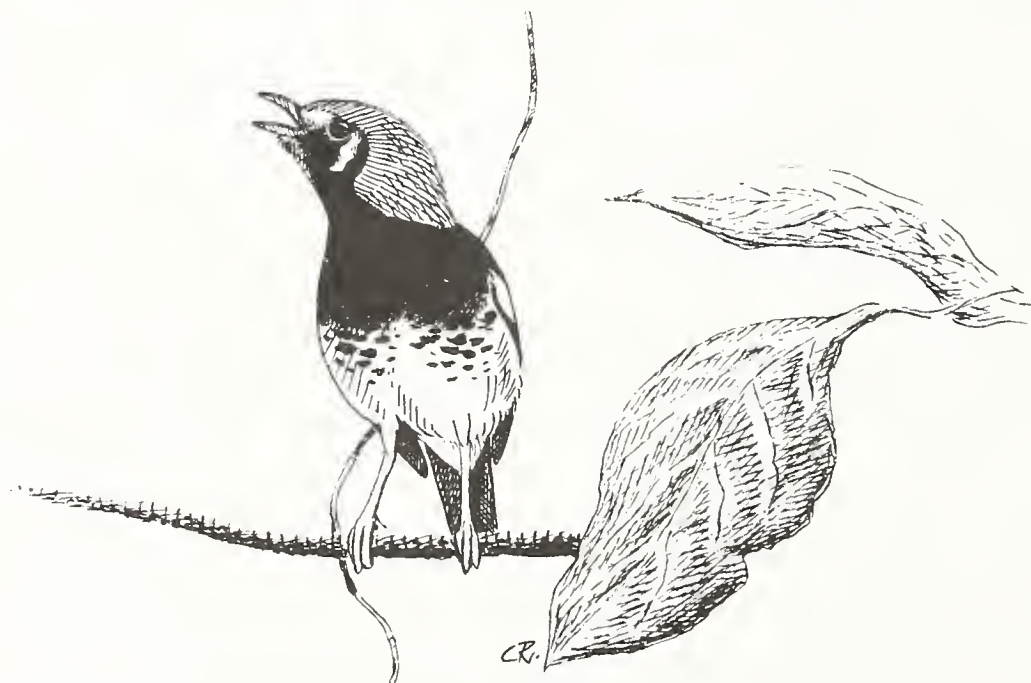
Yet another resident species has been added to the Nepal list this year - Jerdon's Babbler *Moupinia altirostris*. The species was first observed by SB, who saw three near Gaida wildlife camp, and six near Dumariya, both in Chitwan National Park, on 26 November and 7 December 1989 respectively. Subsequently another three were seen by SB and JE on 25 April this year. It seems likely that the species has simply been overlooked in the past. Another first for the country was a Spotted Crake *Porzana porzana* observed at Kosi Tappu, south-east Nepal on 28 February and 3 March (RCo). A Slaty-breasted Rail *Gallirallus striatus* on 1 March, and Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus* in late February, were found at the same locality (RCo). A Baikal Teal *Anas formosa* at Kosi Barrage on 24 February (JN, RO) was the fourth for Nepal. Other rarities seen recently were two Blue-naped Pittas *Pitta nipalensis* at Nagarjung, near Kathmandu in November 1989 (MR), the first since 1983, and Broad-billed Warbler *Tickellia hodgsoni* at Hanga Tham in early spring (March) this year (SBu, PM). Of considerable interest was the discovery in May of Wood Snipes *Gallinago nemoricola* displaying below the Laurebina Pass between Gapte and the Gosainkund Lakes, north-east of Kathmandu (SBu, PM). The only other breeding season records of this

enigmatic bird from Nepal are a proven breeding record from the Barun Valley in 1973, sightings in the Arun Valley in May 1981 and records of displaying birds at Pipar, Annapurna Conservation Area in May 1985.

THAILAND

A Greater Adjutant *Leptoptilos dubius* which had been injured by a gun-shot was picked up from a field by villagers in Lom Kao, Phetchabun in early June (RK, S). Villagers at Khon San, Chaiyaphum reported having seen a total of eight Greater Adjutants in early June (RK). A single male Baikal Teal *Anas formosa* at Bung Boraphet, Nakhon Sawan on 13 February (GH, RS) will be new for Thailand if accepted. Two Comb Ducks *Sarkidiornis melanotos* were at Bung Chawak, Suphanburi on 9 March (KK). A tired looking immature or brown phase Red-footed Booby *Sula sula*, of unknown origin, was seen at the river mouth south of Kantang, Trang on 2 April (CR, DF); the species has not been recorded from Thai waters. On Ha Toop, Ko Libong a Chinese Egret *Egretta eulophotes* in non-breeding plumage was reported (CR, DF) on 3 April and would be the first record for a number of years if accepted.

A Japanese Quail *Coturnix japonica* was reported from Doi Ang Khang, Chiang Mai on 28 April (HB); the species is a rare migrant in Thailand. Several Chestnut-necklaced Partridges *Arborophila (chloropus) charltonii* were observed and heard calling in Khlong Phraya WS, Krabi in March (JW, RR, JE, CR) and represent the first definite record for many years. The presence of Hume's Pheasant *Syrnaticus humiae* was confirmed at Doi Ang Khang in March (JD) when females were observed on Ban Luan south ridge on 7th (one) and on Kob Dong ridge on 8th (three). A record of three adult and two juvenile Stone Curlew *Burhinus oedicephalus* at Tambon Mabkha, Ban Kai, Rayong on 5 May, provided the long awaited evidence that the species breeds in Thailand.

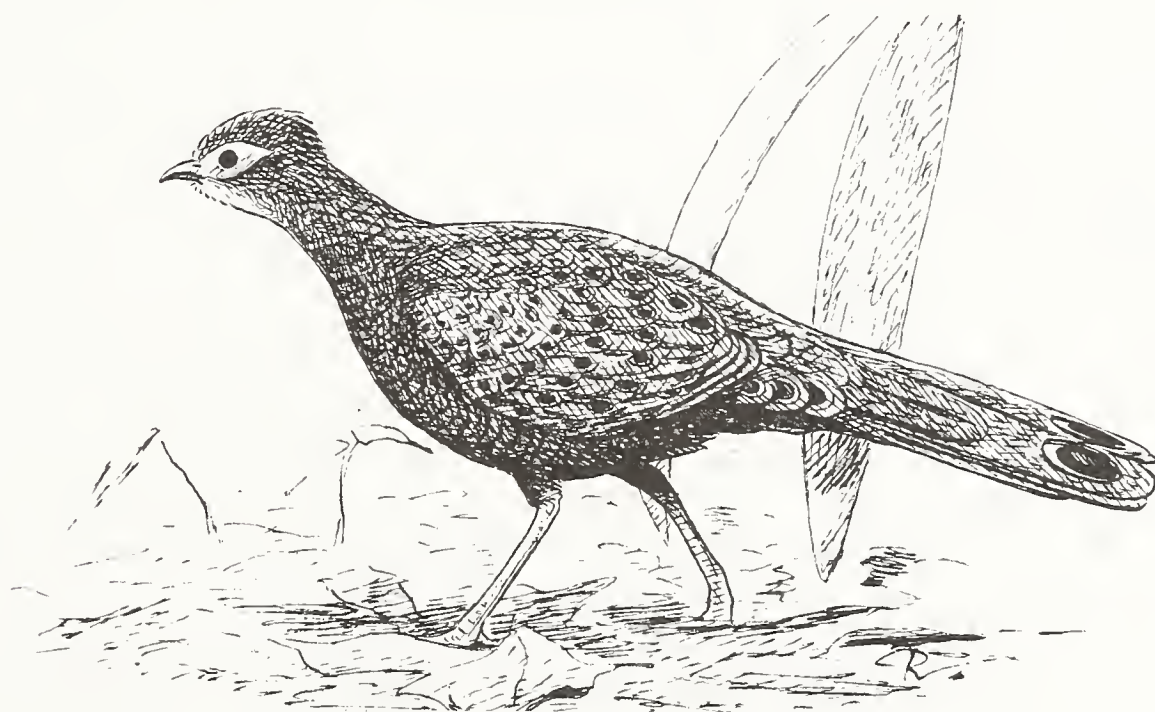


Chestnut-capped Thrush *Zosterops lateralis* (by Craig Robson)

Four Plain-pouched Hornbills *Rhyticeros subruficollis* were reported on 8-9 July, from a new but not unexpected locality for this little known species, Kaeng Krachan NP, Phetchaburi (RC, AR, CS, SS, UV). Two Red Turtle-Doves *Streptopelia tranquebarica* seen near Khlong Thom, Krabi on 26 July (PR, SW) were the first recorded from the peninsula provinces. A Buff-bellied Pipit *Anthus rubescens* was reported with a concentration of other pipits at Ban Khao Noi, Lumtakhong reservoir, Nakhon Ratchasima on 30 December 1989 (AH), and if accepted, would be the first record for Thailand. Five different Chestnut-capped Thrushes *Zoothera interpres* were located singing at Khao Pra Bang Khram during 3-23 May (PR, UT, CR, DW), and a pair was seen feeding 2-3 recently fledged young on 17 June (PR, UT). A single Brown-chested Flycatcher *Rhinomyias brunneata* was observed in lowland forest at Khao Pra Bang Khram on 23 April (PR). Three Silver Orioles *Oriolus mellianus* were at Khao Yai National Park on 31 March (JW, MG, RJ, KK, PK, RL, SV), and a Tristram's Bunting *Emberiza tristrami*, the fourth record for Thailand, was found in a flock of Chestnut Buntings *Emberiza rutila* on the summit of Doi Pui on 22 February.

VIET NAM

Forest bird surveys at a number of sites were carried out between December 1989 and March this year as part of a joint ICBP/government of Viet Nam project. Noteworthy records included an immature male Imperial Pheasant *Lophura imperialis* trapped by rattan-collectors near Cat Bin, south Nghe Tinh, North Annam on 28 February (JE, CR, NC, TL). The species was previously known from a pair sent to J. Delacour from an unknown locality in Central Annam (south Donghoi) in 1923. Surveys at Cat Bin during February-March also uncovered the presence of a population of the recently described Vietnamese



Germain's Peacock-Pheasant *Polyplectron germaini* (by Craig Robson)

Pheasant *Lophura hatinhensis* which has only been recorded from two other localities since its discovery in 1964 (JE, CR, NC, TL).

A White-winged Duck *Cairina scutulata* flying over swamp forest in Nam Bai Cat Tien NP, Dong Nai, Cochinchina on 4 January was the first to be seen in Viet Nam for c. 60 years (CR, NC, TL). Germain's Peacock-Pheasant *Polyplectron germaini* was found to occur commonly in logged and secondary forest in Nam Bai Cat Tien (CR, JE, NC, TL). In North Annam an estimated number of up to 500 Grey-headed Lapwings *Vanellus cinereus*, which represents a potentially important winter concentration, was found wintering along a 73 km stretch of Highway 1 to the north and south of Ha Tinh (JE, CR). At least three pairs of Blyth's Kingfishers *Alcedo hercules* were found in the Cat Bin area, south Nghe Tinh, North Annam in February (JE, CR). This little known species, which was seen and photographed nest excavating, was previously recorded only from Tonkin in Viet Nam.

A visit to Bach Ma 'proposed' national park during January and February resulted in a number of interesting records including: several Silver Pheasants *Lophura nycthemera* believed to be the rare *beli* sub-species (JE, CR); a single Slaty-legged Crake *Rallina eurizonoides* (JE) and Yellow-vented Pigeon *Treron seimundi* (CR, JE) which are both very rare in Indochina; a number of Coral-billed Ground-Cuckoos *Carpococcyx renauldi* (CR, JE) (also common at Cat Bin); and small flocks of wintering Japanese Thrushes *Turdus cardis* (CR, JE).

The rarely recorded endemic Collared Laughingthrush *Garrulax yersini* was not uncommon in logged and primary evergreen forest on Mount Lang Bian, South Annam in January (CR, JE). The rare Yellow-billed Nuthatch *Sitta solangiae*, also seen on the mountain and at nearby Cong Troi, was fairly common. Short-tailed Scimitar-Babblers *Jabouilleia danjoui*, previously known from a few localities, were found at Bach Ma and Cat Bin (CR, JE). Birds were photographed, and observed feeding fledged young at the latter locality (JE).

Records were collated by Craig Robson from observations and contributions by the following: S. Baral (SB), K. D. Bishop (KB), H. Buck (HB), S. Buckton (SBu), B. J. Coates (BC), R. Chantawong (RC), R. Cooper (RCo), J. N. Dymond (JD), J. C. Eames (JE), D. S. Farrow (DF), M. Goody (MG), A. J. Helbig (AH), G. Hopwood (GH), S. Howe (SH), R. Jugmongkol (RJ), R. Kanjanavanit (RK), K. Komolphalin (KK), P. Komolphalin (PK), F. Lambert (FL), R. Lekvanich (RL), P. Morris (PM), T. Mundkur (TM), R. Noske (RN), Nguyen Cu (NC), J. Nilsson (JN), R. Ottvall (RO), A. Riwkiratiyukun (AR), M. Roberts (MR), C. R. Robson (CR), R. Roland (RR), P. D. Round (PR), C. Savetvichikul (CS), S. Setthin (SS), R. Slack (RS), Suparach (S), U. Treesucon (UT), Truong Van La (TL), U. Vongthieres (UV), S. Vuthipong (SV), D. R. Wells (DW), J. Wolstencroft (JW), S. Wongrattana (SW).

Correction to Recent Reports in Bulletin 11: The record of Kashmir Flycatcher *Ficedula subrubra* from Periyar National Park, should have been listed as Red-breasted Flycatcher *F. parva*. We apologise for this error (see also letters page).

THE BULLETIN OF THE ORIENTAL BIRD CLUB provides a forum for news, notices, recent publications, expedition results, reviews, and preliminary or interim publication of studies on Oriental birds by contributors from all parts of the world. Publication of interim results in the OBC Bulletin does not preclude or pre-empt publication of final results as journal papers either by the OBC or elsewhere. Contributions are considered by the Editor and an Editorial Committee, with contributions accepted subject to editing and refereeing where appropriate. Copies of new journals, books or reports for mention or reviewing are always welcomed. Contributions or enquiries should be sent to the Bulletin Editor, Oriental Bird Club, c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Beds., SG19 2DL, UK.

Guidelines for contributors

Whilst the Editor is always pleased to discuss possible contributions with potential authors, and to advise on preparation, it would be helpful if the following guidelines could be adhered to:

1. Articles These should be written clearly, preferably typed, on one side of the page, with all lines double-spaced, leaving wide margins, and should be no longer than 2000 words. Scientific names should appear at the first mention of each species or, if all species appear in a table, they may be given there instead. Scientific names should, where possible, follow King *et al.* (1975) *A field guide to the birds of South-East Asia*.

Any tables to accompany articles should be prepared on separate pieces of paper, and be thoroughly checked. Titles of tables should be self-explanatory. Diagrams should be clearly drawn, in ink, ideally 15cm wide and 11cm high. References should be cited in alphabetical order at the end of the paper in the same style used in this Bulletin.

It would be helpful if two copies of each contribution could be submitted. Articles submitted on disc are welcomed; please contact the Editor for details.

2. Recent Reports These should follow the format in the current edition of the OBC Bulletin, and be sent to OBC, c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Beds. SG19 2DL, U.K.
3. News/Information Typed or hand-written contributions should be sent to R. Grimmett, OBC, c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Beds. SG19 2DL, U.K.

Although every effort is made to retain all articles in their submitted form, the Editorial Committee reserves the right to make changes that it deems necessary, and, in a minimum of cases, without prior reference to the author. It is assumed that all contributors submitting material understand and accept these conditions.

For News and Views, Book Reviews, Announcements and Letters, the deadline for submission of material is 1 March (May Bulletin) and 1 September (November Bulletin). Recent reports are needed one month earlier. The deadlines do not apply to the main articles which will be published as soon as possible after acceptance by the Editorial Committee.

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